

Miscellaneous Reflections,

Occasion'd by the

C O M E T

Which appear'd

In *December* 1680.

Chiefly tending to explode Popular
Superstitions.

Written to a Doctor of the Sorbon,

By Mr. BAYLE.

Translated from the *French*.

To which is added,

The Author's **L I F E**.

In Two Volumes.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. Morphew near Stationers-Hall.
M. DCC. VIII.

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COMET

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The Author's LIFE.

In Two Volumes.

LONDON,

Printed for J. Morphew, near St. Dunstons Church, in Fleet-Street.
MDCCLXXXII.

The Translator to the Reader.

THE Character of a polite Writer is so eminently Mr. Bayle's due, that 'twere very needless recommending the Beautys of his Wit and Stile. They who have not read his Books in the *French*, are yet prepossess'd with such an Opinion of him, and particularly of this Work, that if it any where falls short of their Idea, 'tis probable they'l be much readier to lay the Fault on the Translation than the Original. As to which I can only say, that I have done my Endeavor to come up to the Purity and Elegance of his Stile; but if I have not succeeded in this, I have at least taken his Meaning aright, and preserv'd the Spirit and Delicacy of his Thought.

As to Mr. Bayle's particular Opinions, it is not the Business of a Translator, either to justify or condemn 'em: but 'twill sufficiently warrant the publishing his Works in *English*, that none of 'em

have bin formally condemn'd in the Protestant Countrys abroad ; and that his Dictionary, tho containing all his boldest Thoughts, is printing in *Engliss* with a Royal Licence, and will be publish'd in a short time.

The following Preface will account for Mr. Bayle's affecting in this Work the Stile of a Roman Catholick, and *French Courtier*. So that I'm only to acquaint the Reader, that he is not from the Title of the following Book to fancy it a dry Philosophical Dissertation on the Nature of Comets ; far from it : Comets are the least of Mr. Bayle's care, farther than as they afford him occasions of very uncommon and surprizing Reflections, and of the most exquisite Satyr and Ridicule on Things and Persons.

Instead of the *Additions to his Miscellaneous Reflections* bound up with the third Edition of 'em in *French*, which relates only to a private Dispute between him and Mr. *Jurieu*, we have given his Life written by a Friend of his o' t'other side the Water, to a Peer of *Great Britain*, which it's hop'd will be acceptable to those who may purchase his Dictionary, or any other of his Works.

The

The Author's Preface to the Reader.

TWO Reasons which seem'd considerable, oblig'd me to think of writing a short Preface. It seem'd proper to acquaint my Readers before-hand, 1. *Why the Stile of this Piece is all along that of a Roman Catholick, whether it treats of Affairs of State or of those of Religion.* 2. *Why this third Edition is not such as I had formerly promis'd.*

The Reason of its being wrote in the Stile of a Roman Catholick, will sufficiently appear from the Account which I am to give of the Occasion of the Work.

I was Philosophy Professor in Sedan when the Comet appear'd in December 1680. and found my self eternally teas'd with Questions about it, proceeding from Peoples Curiosity or their Fears. I did all I cou'd to recover those who were disturb'd at this pretended ill Presage, but

gain'd very little on 'em by mere Philosophical Reasons ; still they answer'd, that God certainly expos'd these awakening Phenomena on purpose to give Sinners time to prevent by Repentance the Evils which hung over their Heads. Upon this I thought it in vain talking any longer, unless I cou'd offer an Argument to prove, that the Divine Attributes will not allow Comets being design'd to such an end. I began to consider, and soon lit on the Theological Argument, which is to be seen in the Body of the Discourse. I cou'd not remember I had ever met with it in the course of my reading, or heard it in Conversation ; this made me fancy something new in't, and gave me the thought of writing a Letter on the Subject, to be inserted in the *Mercure Galant*. I did all I cou'd not to exceed the Bounds of a Letter ; but the abundance of the Matter wou'd not allow my being so short, and oblig'd me to take other Measures, that is, to consider my Letter as a Work which must be publish'd apart. So I affected Brevity no longer, I enlarg'd at my ease on all the Matter which offer'd, still keeping * *Mr. De Visé* in view. I took a Resolution to

* Author of the *Mercure Galant*.

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send him my Letter, and desire him to give it to his Printer, and get either Mr. de la Reinie's Licence for printing it if that wou'd do, as it had for some other Treatises on Comets; or a Royal Licence, if we must go that way to work. He kept my Manuscript in his Hands for some time without knowing the Author's Name. At last, when a Friend of mine went to ask him about it, he answer'd, he was inform'd by a Person, to whom he had given it to read, that Mr. Reinie wou'd never take the Consequences of publishing it on himself, and that we must apply for the Approbation of Doctors before we cou'd sue for the Royal Licence: a painful, tedious Form, which I had not leisure enough to go thro. Upon this the Manuscript was withdrawn, and the College of Sedan being soon after suppress'd, which occasion'd my retiring into Holland in Autumn 1681. I thought no more of having my Letter on Comets printed at Paris.

Thus you see the reason of my assuming the Stile of a Roman Catholick, and imitating Mr. Vise's Language and Elogys on the Publick Affairs. This Conduct was absolutely necessary to have any thing printed at Paris; and I thought my imitating the *Mercure Galant* in some things

wou'd help to recommend me to Mr. Reine's or the Royal Licence. And as I took the utmost Precaution not to be known for the Author of this Letter, which was printed in Holland a few Months after my Arrival, I chang'd nothing as to the Stile or Language: nothing I thought cou'd be properer than such a Stile, to make the World believe, that the Letter on Comets was not the Work of a Person who had left France for his Religion.

They who will give themselves the trouble to consider these Circumstances, will find all the Satisfaction from 'em they can desire. I shall add one word more; that a good many things were inserted * during the Impression, which were not in the Manuscript that had bin sent to the Author of the *Mercuré Galant*.

Let's pass to the second Article, and say, why this Third Edition contains nothing of what I had promis'd

I had made my Readers expect to find it increas'd with a great number of new Proofs, and new Answers to the Difficultys, &c. Yet it's exactly the same with the Second Edition; I have added nothing, I

* Chiefly in the second Edition.

have strack out nothing, I have * alter'd nothing: I consider'd that this Work being already but too like those Rivers which make their course by continual windings, I cou'd add no new Digressions without rendering the reading of it extremely perplext. This had bin betraying my Readers into a Labyrinth, or embarking 'em † on the Meander, and that's what they are not fond of. I know not whether other Authors might have the Skill to make such a Work grow up after the manner of living Bodys, per in-
tus susceptionem, by new Juices distributed thro' the whole Mass in a just proportion: but for my part I own my self incapable of it, and therefore shall imitate the manner by which Nature they say augments lifeless Bodys, per juxta positionem, by Matter join'd to their exterior Parts. I shall reserve my Additions for a new Tome, which shall be printed apart

* Except the Orthography, and the Disposition of some Words in a very few places.

† Non secus ac liquidis Phrygius Mæander in undis
Ludit, & ambiguo lapsu refluitque fluitque,
Occurrensque sibi venturas aspicit undas,
Et nunc ad fontes, nunc ad mare versus apertum
Incertas exercet aquas: ita Dædalus implet
Innumeras errore vias, vixque ipse reverti
Ad limen potuit—

Or. Met. l. 2. v. 162.

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as soon as I am a little more advanc'd in my Critical Dictionary, with which I am wholly taken up at present. If I put off my Creditors so long, 'tis because, having examin'd anew the Difficultys which may be rais'd upon the Parallel between Paganism and Atheism, it appears to me, that they may be all resolv'd by the Principles I have already laid down, and by an Application of the Answers already given: So there's no pressing hast. The only Objection which to me seems considerable, and most worthy of being fully discuss'd, is that which I examine at the 134 Section. I question tho whether I shall dwell much upon it in the new Tome, the Matter being infinitely delicate, and what one can't well explain, nor enter deeply into without incroaching on certain fixt Bounds, which 'twere perhaps better not to meddle with. It happens, I don't know by what Fatality, that the more one reasons on the Divine Attributes from Ideas, the clearest, the noblest, and the most sublime in Metaphysicks, the more one jostles with a Croud of Scripture Passages. And tho this Repugnancy arises not from the things themselves, but from a difference in Stile, 'tis yet difficult to remove it in a way which shall satisfy all Minds. On the whole, it shou'd not be thought strange,

strange, that Authors, who had no other School than Inspiration, and were oblig'd to accommodate themselves to the Sense of the People, shou'd not exactly agree, as to all the Ideas which their Phrases seem to comprehend, with Authors train'd up to an Analytical Method, who keep strictly to it, who define their Words before-hand, and make use of 'em always in the same sense; whose whole aim is speculative Instruction, and who don't sute their Doctrines to the necessity which the People are under of being struck with sensible Images, &c. I shall say something on this Head in my Dictionary, at the Article of Gregory of Arimini.

This is all the Advertisement I intended in this place; but because the Printer desires I wou'd fill up this Page, I shall make one Observation, which to me seems proper for confuting the vulgar Error concerning Comets.

The War of Europe from 1688. to 1697. was one of the fiercest and most destructive that has bin known. Yet no Comet appear'd either a little before it broke out, or for all the time it lasted; but on the contrary, in Sept. 1698. a Comet was seen, when Europe was just deliver'd from the War, and a Peace on the point of being
con-

concluded between the Christians and the Turk. So that here's a Comet betwixt two Treatys of Peace, which have put an end to War in all parts of Europe, and chang'd the Face of Publick Affairs very much for the better; a Comet that brings back the happy time in which the Temple of Janus is shut up. If we can't expect, at least let us wish it may last long, and vye with those Times of which the Latin Poet gives this Prediction.

*Aspera tum positis mitescent sæcula bellis,
 Cana Fides, & Vesta, Remo cum fratre
 Quirinus (arctis
 Jura dabunt: diræ ferro, & compagibus
 Claudentur belli portæ. Furor impius
 intus (aheneis
 Sæva sedens super arma, & centum vinctus
 Post tergum nodis, fremet horridus ore
 cruento.*

Virg. Æn. l. i. v. 291.

Jun. i. 1699.

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ERRATA.

PAGE 8. line 5. for *so fair a*, read *the fairest*.
 P. 25. l. 1. dele *the*. P. 76. l. 3. for *the*, r. *their*.
 P. 99. lin. 15. for *Eclipse*, r. *an Eclipse*. P. 101. l. 5.
 for *met*, r. *meet with*. P. 120. l. 29. for *any*, r. *a*.
 P. 133. l. 23. for *how they deserv'd*, r. *how they had deserv'd*.
 P. 156. l. 10. for *fortunate to quell*, r. *fortunate as to quell*.
 P. 182. l. 17. for *a*, r. *any*. P. 217. l. 11. for *who*, r. *which*.
 P. 272. l. 12. for *Cause*, r. *Course*. P. 353. l. 1. for *cineres*, r. *cinerem*. P. 361. l. 3.
 for *e'er*, r. *ne'er*. P. 378. l. 2. for *chuse*, r. *chose*.
 P. 497. l. 25. for *Pension*, r. *Pensions*. P. 507. l. 4. for *the King*,
 r. *a King*. P. 513. l. 5. for *by*, r. *from*. P. 513. l. 13. for *and*,
 r. *for*. P. 515. l. 2. *reserv'd* for, dele *for*.

Miscel-

*Miscellaneous Reflections,
occasion'd by a Comet which
appear'd in December, 1680.*

*Written to a Doctor of the Sorbon,
by Mr. BALE.*

SECT. I.

YOU judg'd very right, Sir, when you wrote me word, that they who had not an Opportunity of seeing the Comet while it appear'd just before Day-break the latter end of *November*, and the beginning of *December* following, shou'd not wait very long for a Sight of it at a more seasonable Hour; for in effect it began to appear again upon the 22d of last Month, just about the Dusk of the Evening. But I question whether you are in the right, in desiring my Thoughts upon it, and promising a particular Answer to whatever I shou'd write you upon this Subject. This is going some lengths farther perhaps than you were aware; for to deal plainly with you, I don't know what it

B

is

is to think regularly upon any Subject; I naturally run all the Changes upon it; I often quit my Track, and break into grounds where one can hardly guess the way: In short, I'm the fittest Man alive to mortify those Doctors, who expect to have every thing serv'd up in all the Formalities of Rule and Method. For this reason, Sir, I wou'd have you consider better on't, and think again of the Proposition you made me. I'll allow you a Fortnight to take your last Resolution. This Advice, together with my hearty Wishes for a prosperous new Year, is all the Gift you are like to have from me for this turn. I am, &c.

Jan. 1. 1681.

SECT. II. *In what Method he designs to proceed.*

SINCE after mature consideration you still persist in desiring me to communicate my thoughts on the nature of Comets, and promise to examine 'em regularly, I must e'en resolve to write to you. But permit me to do this at my leisure, and with all manner of Freedom and Ease, as things shall offer from time to time to my Thoughts: For as to the Plan which you signify'd your desire I shou'd form, and follow from step to step, I must intreat you, Sir, by no means to expect it. Perhaps it might do very well in one who's an Author by Profession, whose business it is to form clear and well-concerted Views: Such Men are in the right to lay down a Scheme in the beginning, to divide into Books and Chapters, to conceive a general Idea of the Contents of each Chapter, and work upon these Ideas alone. But

as

as for me, who pretend not to the Character of an Author, I shan't, if you please, condemn myself to this Drudgery. You know my way already, you have had time enough to consider whether it will fit your purpose; hereafter, if you are embarrass'd by it, you must blame your self alone, 'tis intirely of your own seeking. To proceed:

SECT. III. *That the Presages of Comets are founded upon no solid Reasons.*

I Hear several Persons daily reason about the Nature of Comets; and tho I'm no Astronomer, either in reality or by profession, yet I have examin'd with some exactness whatever the most knowing have publish'd upon this Subject: And I must freely tell you, Sir, that nothing appears convincing to me in all their Reasonings, except what they alledg against the Errors of the common People, who will needs have it, that the Comets threaten this World of ours with all kind of Misery and Desolation.

Hence it is that I can't comprehend how so great a Doctor as you are, who by having critically foretold the return of our Comet, must needs be convinc'd that these are Bodys subject to the ordinary Laws of Nature, and by no means Prodigys exempt from any certain Rule, shou'd yet be carry'd away with the Stream, and imagine with the common Herd, notwithstanding all the Reasons of the select Few among us, That Comets are in the nature of Heralds sent forth to declare War with Human kind on

the part of Almighty God. Were you a Preacher I cou'd easily excuse you, because Thoughts of this kind being naturally capable of the most pompous and pathetick Ornaments of Eloquence, bring in much larger Returns to him who retails 'em, and make much stronger Impressions upon the Hearts of the Audience, than a thousand other Propositions demonstratively prov'd. But that a Doctor, whose business is not to harangue the People, and who ought therefore to nourish his Understanding with nothing but pure Truth, shou'd in this point fall in with Sentiments so weakly founded, and take up with Tradition, and the Tales of Poets and Historians, is what I can by no means bring my self to digest.

SECT. IV. *Of the Authority of Poets.*

IT is not possible to go upon a more wretched Foundation: For to begin with the Poets, You can't but be sensible, Sir, that Men of this Character are so dotingly fond of bringing several pompous Descriptions into their Pieces, such as those of Prodigys, and giving an Air of *Marvelous* to all their Hero's Adventures, that to compass their End at any rate, they never spare inventing expressly, and feigning the most astonishing things. Insomuch, that far from believing upon their bare Credit that the Subversion of the Roman Commonwealth was the Work of two or three preceding Comets, I shou'd not for my part have the Faith to believe there was any such thing as a Comet about that time, were there no better Authority than theirs. For in a word, you are to understand, that a Man who
once

once takes it in his head to furnish out a Poem, does at the same time make a Monopoly of the whole Magazine of Nature. Heaven and Earth move no more by any other Laws than his: He has Eclipses, or he has Tempests at Command, just as he likes best; all the Elements exert themselves to strike in *a propos* with his Designs: He has Armys in the Air, and Monsters at Land, as many and as oft as he thinks fit: The Angels and Demons appear precisely at his Summons: The immortal Gods let down by Machines, hold themselves in a readiness to answer any Exigency. And as Comets, of all things in the World, are what he chiefly needs, by reason of that Superstition which most People have a Tincture of with regard to these Bodys; if he finds any of 'em in History ready made to his hand, he seizes 'em as his own Property; if he happens to find none there, he makes 'em out of his own head, and gives 'em the Complexion and Cast, the Glare and Figure that's likeliest to affect Mortals, and fittest to portend that Heaven in a very signal manner is interested in the Affair in hand. And now after all, who can forbear laughing, to hear a great many Men, of some share of Wit too, insist upon the dreadful Influence of Comets, and yet able to give no better Arguments in defence of their Opinion, than a *Terris mutantem regna Cometen*—Lucan. a *regnorum Eversor*,—*rubuit lethale Cometes*—Sil. Ital. or *nec diri toties arsere Cometa*—Virg. and *Nunquam terris spectatum impune Cometen*—Claud. and some more such fine Ends of Verse from the antient Poets.

SECT. V. Of the Authority of Historians.

AS to our Writers of History, I readily own they don't take the liberty of feigning extraordinary Phenomena at this rate; yet there appears in most of 'em so excessive a Passion for retailing all the Miracles, and all the Visions which the Credulity of Mankind has authoriz'd, that it wou'd not be Prudence to take up promiscuously with all they transmit of this kind. I don't know whether it be that they think their Historys might look mean and paltry, did they not mix here and there a Scene of Prodigy and Supernatural, to enhance their Accounts of common Events, such as come to pass in the ordinary course of things: Or whether they hope by this kind of *Regale*, which gratifys the natural Palat but too much, to keep up their Reader's Humour, by supplying him continually with something to entertain his Admiration: Or rather whether they flatter themselves, that the meeting with such wonderful Occurrences in their Historys, will render 'em the more valuable hereafter, and recommend 'em to the Ages to come. But be their Reasons what they will, it can't be deny'd that Historians take a more than ordinary satisfaction in collecting and bringing into their Story whatever does but smell of the Miracle. *Livy* furnishes us with a pregnant Instance of this in his own Person: for tho' he's an Author of excellent Sense, and of a very exalted Genius; and tho' he has left us a History which comes very near to perfection in its kind, yet he has shamefully fall'n into this general Vice, by recording an
insuffe-

insufferable parcel of ridiculous Prodigys, such as the Pagan Superstition of those times thought fit to be solemnly expiated by Sacrifice : The true Reason, as Authors inform us, why *St. Gregory* the Roman Pontiff condemn'd this Historian's Books to be burnt. What a world of this kind of Rubbish do we meet with in those huge unwieldy Volumes, which contain the Annals of the several Orders of our Monks ! where the Compilers seem to have crouded in without Method or Judgment, and purely for the Lust of gratifying that Emulation, or rather Envy, which reigns among the different Societys, whatever can be conceiv'd most chimerical and absurd in the Article of Miracles. But this by the by, and among our selves only. You know, Sir, that for fear of scandalizing the common People, or provoking these good Fathers, we wou'd do well to forbear exposing the Vices of their Annals, and content our selves that we are not oblig'd to read 'em.

I'm amaz'd that those who talk so much of a certain Sympathy between History and Poetry, who assure us, upon the Faith of *Cicero* and *Quintilian*, that History is nothing more than Poesy set free from the Bondage of Verse, and upon the Credit of *Lucian*, that the Bark of History would be sluggish, and even motionless, did not the fresh Breezes of Poetry sometimes fill its Sails ; who affirm, that to be a good Historian, one must of necessity be a Poet too, and that the Passage from Poetry to History is almost insensible, tho few or none have ever attempted to make a trip from one to the other : I'm amaz'd, I say, that those who tell us so many fine things, with-

out knowing perhaps that *Agathias* was in reality Historian and Poet successively, and felt no more alteration than one does in crossing from one Coast to another, were never aware how they gave the Criticks so fair a Topick of Railery and Ridicule upon the Historians, by telling 'em that in reality there's a wonderful Sympathy between the two, and that one feeds upon Prodigy and Romance no less greedily than the other. Happy that Pair of excellent Poets, who are at this time employ'd in writing the History of *Lewis the Great*, which abounds with real Miracle all over! and where, without launching into Fiction, they have matter enough to glut that reigning Passion so incident to all Historians as well as Poets, of laying themselves out in things extraordinary.

Yet after all, I'm not for wrangling the Historians out of their due Authority. Let the People believe on, without having any regard to the Historian's own Superstition in the Case: Let 'em believe that there have been full as many Comets seen as their Historys mention; and that all those Calamitys have follow'd in the succeeding Years, which the same Historians take notice of. I'm content; and so far I go along with 'em. But this is as far as I can go, and 'tis the utmost that any Man can reasonably require of me. Let's now see what this amounts to. I defy you with all your Logick to infer from hence, that therefore these Comets have either been the Cause or the Prognostick of the Calamitys which follow'd their Appearance: For the Authority of the Historian is limited to this, That there have been Comets seen in the Heavens, and that soon after there have been Calamitys felt upon Earth: Which

Which is far enough from proving, that one or either of the two is the certain Cause or Prognostick of the other; unless you will grant me that a Seamstress in *Cheapside*, who as often as she pops out her Head sees a Train of Coaches driving by her Window, may reasonably conclude, that she her self is the true Cause of all these Coaches moving that way, at least that her appearing at the Window is a very just presage to the Neighbourhood that a Line of Coaches is quickly to pass by.

SECT. VI. *That Historians are very fond of Digressions.*

YOU'll tell me, without doubt, that Historians do expressly remark how these Comets have been the Signs, or even the Causes of those Ravages which have ensu'd, and consequently that their Authority reaches farther than I allow. By no means, Sir, 'tis possible they may observe what you say, for they are much addicted to Reflections, and sometimes spin out the Moral to such a length, that the Reader, provok'd to find the Thred of the Story interrupted, cou'd tell 'em, with a hearty Curse at the tail on't, *Riserbate questo per la predica*. A Passion of being thought learned, even in matters out of their Sphere, betrays 'em very often into Digressions, the most injudicious and improper imaginable: As when *Ammianus Marcellinus*, upon occasion of an Earthquake which happen'd in the Reign of the Emperor *Constantius*, spends his whole *Aristotle*, and his *Anaxagoras* upon the
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back of him ; argues himself quite out of sight, quotes Poets, quotes Theologifts in the point ; and afterwards, upon occasion of an Eclipse of the Sun under the fame *Constantius*, throws himself desperately into the depths of Astronomy, reads Lectures upon *Ptolomy*, and blunders so far out of his way, as even to philosophize upon the Causes of *Parelions*. But it does not therefore follow, that the Remarks of these Historians have a right to authorize vulgar Opinions, because they are not concerning things which properly fall under the cognizance of an Historian. If the Question be concerning a Revolution of State, a Negotiation of Peace, a Battel, a Siege, &c. the Authority of an Historian may reasonably be decisive, because it may happen he has search'd into the Archives, or lit upon the most secret Instructions, and drawn from the purest Fountains of the Truth of Facts.

But the Question relating to the Influence of the Stars, and the invisible Springs of Nature, the Gentlemen Historians have no authorizing Character ; nor are they to be otherwise consider'd than as private Persons, free to give their Opinion, which shall have its due weight, according to the proportion of its Author's Knowledg and Insight into natural Philosophy, and no farther. Now upon this foot you'll allow me, Sir, that the Credit of Historians runs low, because, generally speaking, they are but wretched Philosophers.

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SECT. VII. *Of the Authority of Tradition.*

I Don't think it necessary, after what has been already offer'd, to bestow a particular Confutation upon the Pretences from Tradition or Universal Consent: for if the Prejudice we lie under from time immemorial with relation to Comets, has any reasonable Foundation, 'tis manifest it can be nothing but the Observations remaining upon this head in Historys and other antient Books, in the several Ages of the World: so that if these Observations carry no great weight with 'em, as it seems they do not, from what has been already advanc'd, and as will appear much clearer by what remains to be urg'd, we must lay no great stress for the future on the number of common Votes, which are all founded on this bottom.

Where's the harm of observing what passës generally in the Minds of Men, when they are about to adopt an Opinion? Sure I am, were this put in practice, we might retrench the Suffrages of an infinite number of People to the Authority of a Person or two, who having broach'd a new Doctrine, which they were of course suppos'd to have thorowly examin'd, have, by the mere dint of a general Merit, impos'd it upon all about 'em; and these again upon a great many others, whose natural * Sloth found its account in swallowing by wholesale whatever was offer'd,

* Unusquisque mavult credere quam judicare; nunquam de vicâ judicatur, semper creditur, versatque nos & præcipitat traditus per manus error, alienisque perimus exemplis: sanabimur si modo separemur a cœtu. Nunc vero stat contra rationem defensor mali sui populus. *Seneca de vitâ beatâ, cap. 1.*
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rather than in examining the Reasons Article by Article. By which means, the numbers of credulous and careless Followers increasing daily, becomes a new Motive to others to spare themselves the trouble of examining an Opinion which they see is grown general, and which they honestly imagine is become so by no other means than the Solidity of the Reasons made use of in the beginning for its establishment; till in the Issue one is reduc'd to a necessity of believing what all the World believes, for fear of being thought a factious Spirit, one that sets up for being wiser than the rest of the World, and who opposes his private Sentiments to venerable Antiquity: insomuch that it becomes a Character of Merit by degrees, and the sign of a good Man not to examine any thing at all, but refer himself wholly to Tradition. Judg now, if a hundred Millions of Men drawn into an Opinion at the rate I represent, are sufficient to render it probable; and whether the strongest Prejudices built upon the number of Believers, ought not to be reduc'd, doing the fair part by all the World, to the Authority of two or three Persons, who we'l suppose had examin'd what they taught. Think, Sir, of certain fabulous Opinions, which after a long and quiet possession have been scouted among us at last within our own Age; be the number of Authorities and Witnesses upon which they subsisted ever so great, for as much as these Witnesses handed 'em from one to another, without examining what they convey'd, they ought all to stand but for one: And conclude upon this foot, that tho a great many Nations, and Generations of Men, have agreed in charging the Comets with

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all the Disasters which happen after their Appearance, the Probability of this Opinion is notwithstanding no greater than if maintain'd by seven or eight Persons only ; because upon Inquiry we don't find above this number who now are, or ever have been of this Opinion, after having examin'd it impartially by the Principles of Philosophy.

SECT. VIII. *Why he does not take notice of the Authority of Philosophers.*

NOW, Sir, wou'd you know the reason why I have not brought the Authority of Philosophers into the Ballance of the Account, as well as the Poets and Historians ? I'll tell you ; 'tis because I'm persuaded, that if the Testimony of the Philosophers has any weight at all with you, 'tis as it renders the Tradition in this point more universal, and not as 'tis supported by any better Reasons than ordinary. You are a Man of too much sense to be the Property of any Philosopher, let him be what he will, unless he attacks you fairly by the Avenues of Reason ; and the World must do you this Justice, that in matters you judg to fall within the compass of Reason, you follow no other Guide than pure Reason : so that it is not the Philosophers as such who abuse you in this point, since it is plain their strongest Reasonings in behalf of malignant Influences deserve Pity. Will you suffer me then to tell you with the freedom of an old Friend, how it comes to pass that you give into this vulgar Opinion in particular, without ever consulting your

your Reason upon it. 'Tis because you imagine there's something Supernatural in the case, as we say of some Distempers, after the famous *Hippocrates*: 'tis because you imagine, that the universal Consent of so many Nations, in the Course of so many Ages, can proceed from nothing less than a degree of Divine Inspiration; *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*: 'tis because you're accusom'd by your Character of a Christian Divine, to drop the Cause as soon as you apprehend there's a Mystery in the way; which is a very commendable Docility in the main, but does not fail in some cases, by being stretcht to too great a Latitude, to interfere with the Rights of natural Reason, as Monsieur * *Pascal* has very justly observ'd: 'tis in short, because having your Conscience scar'd, you are ready to believe that the Corruption of the World puts all the fearfullest Plagues into the Hands of God, which the good God is notwithstanding loth to pour out upon the Earth, till he has first try'd whether Mankind will take warning and repent, as he did we know in the case of the universal Deluge. This all together, Sir, is what compounds the Charm which binds your strongest Facultys, and which you are not able to fence against with all that Address which qualifys you so well for discovering the fallacious Reasonings of the Schools.

This being the case, I must not hope to deceive you by arguing upon Principles of Philosophy; I must either give you over quite and clean, or convince you from Principles of Piety and Religion. And this I propose in good earnest to do (for I'm now resolv'd you shan't get out of my

* *Pensées de Monsieur Pascal, chap. 9.*

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Clutches) after I have first laid open, to make my self amends by the way, several Reasons founded upon good Sense, which expose the Folly of the common Opinion concerning the Influences of Comets. Guess what those Principles of Piety are, which I keep in reserve ; guess, I say, if you can, whilst at my leisure hours I draw up a kind of Prelude, which turns upon Principles of a more common kind.

March 15. 1681.

SECT. IX. *I Reason against the Presages of Comets, That 'tis very probable they have no virtue to produce any thing upon Earth.*

HERE, Sir, are some of my Reasons from Philosophy. One may venture to say in the first place, that 'tis very uncertain at least, whether Bodys at such a distance from the Earth as these be, can send forth such a Quantity of matter as is capable of a considerable Action here. For if it be the general Opinion of all Partys of Philosophers, ever since we have been beaten out of the old Notion concerning the Matter of Comets, that the Earth's Atmosphere, that's to say the utmost Space to which the Exhalations and Vapors ascend, determines about the middle Region of the Air, at three or four Leagues Elevation at most : Why shou'd we believe that the Atmosphere of the Comets reaches many Millions of Leagues farther? One is somewhat puzzled to tell how the Planets and Comets are able to produce Qualitys at such a distance as the Earth, which shou'd cause very remarkable Alterations there, when the Earth it self

self can't produce such at twenty or thirty Leagues distance.

SECT. X. *Whether they send forth any thing besides Light.*

WILL you say, that since the Comets convey their Light hither, they may as well convey something else? This is easily answer'd, that the Light they send us comes originally from the Sun, and that they contribute to return it in the quality of an Opaque Body only, which causes a Reflexion of the Sun-beams upon us: so that whatever Hypothesis we go upon for explaining the Propagation of Light, whether the Principles of *Aristotle* or *Epicurus*, or those of *Monsieur Descartes*, one conceives very clearly, that the Comets can blaze without any positive Act of their own, and without sparing the least particle of their genuine Substance, to be transmitted into this lower World.

SECT. XI. *Whether their Light carries off any Atoms with it.*

WILL you say then, that the Light clears off a vast quantity of Atoms from the Body of the Comet, and conveys 'em into our World as it passes thither by the way of Reflexion? If you have nothing more to say, there's no need of a new Answer: It's enough to tell you over again, that the Atoms which the Sun-beams raise from the Earth and from the Waters, wait upon these reflected Beams but a very little way; and that we are to judg accordingly of those which the Sun raises from other Bodys.

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SECT. XII. *What the Activity of their Light may be.*

WILL you say, Sir, that the Light it self reverberated by Comets, is capable of doing much Mischief? But there's no likelihood of this, because the Light is not in being when the Effects we attribute to Comets are in course; and besides, the Action of this Light is so very weak with respect to us, that a dim Lamp burning in an open Field illuminates and warms the Air around, much more than the largest blazing Star. As it wou'd be therefore ridiculous to ascribe a Power to the Lamp's Light of producing great Changes within the sphere of its Activity, besides the Illumination it self; so is it no less ridiculous to ascribe to the Light of a Comet, the Power of confounding the Elements, and troubling the publick Peace of the World. Not to say, that the Light of a Comet being nothing more than the Light of the Sun extremely rebated, it is absurd to ascribe Effects to it, which are above the Power of the Sun it self, as it wou'd be to imagine that a Candle stuck up in one of the publick Places of the Town, shou'd keep all the Inhabitants warm, when a brisk Fire in every one's Chamber can hardly preserve 'em from Cold.

SECT. XIII. *That it is as hard for Exhalations to descend as to ascend.*

WILL you say, the Case of the Earth and of the Comets is very different; that tho the Exhalations of the Earth are not able to
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ascend to the Region of the Comets, it does not therefore follow but the Virtue of the Comets may reach as far as the Earth, because the Descent is always easier than the Ascent; and that it is against the pinch of the Hill to get from hence to the Comets, whereas it is down hill all the way from them to us? But 'tis not hard to overthrow this reasoning; for if it has any force at all, it is upon supposition, that the Earth is the Center of the Universe, and that all heavy Bodys naturally tend to their Center. Now as 'tis one of the hardest matters to make out Suppositions of this kind, so nothing is easier than to destroy all the Reasonings form'd upon these Ideas. How can any one tell, whether the Earth be in the Center of the World or no? Is it not evident, that to find out the Center of any Body, we must know its Surface and Circumference? And for this Reason, it being impossible for the human Understanding to discover the Extremitys of the World, or to determine where the Bounds of it lie, 'tis also impossible to determine whether the Earth stands exactly in the Center or no. Besides, what assurance have we that there are any Bodys which naturally incline to the Center of the World? Don't we perceive on the contrary, that all Bodys which move round a Center, remove from this Center to as great a distance as possible? Has not the Experience of this constrain'd the greatest part of *Aristotle's* Followers to give up the point, and acknowledg with *Monf. Descartes*, that this is one of the general Laws of Nature? Nothing therefore is more senseless, than to fancy there are Bodys which tend naturally to the Center of the Earth; nay, 'tis much more reasonable to affirm,

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that they naturally tend as far from it as they can, and that those Bodys which have the force to do so, remove themselves in effect. From whence it follows, that those which have less force are driven to the Center, because the whole being fill'd up, it is impossible for a Body to move off from any given Point, but some other Body must of necessity approach it.

From hence it is easy to shew that People are grossly mistaken, when they fancy that the Exhalations of the Comets may easier descend upon the Earth, than the Exhalations of the Earth rise up towards the Heavens. For whatever System we chuse, we must allow that the motion round any common Center in the World is very considerable: Let it be round the Earth, as the University-men will have it; or round the Sun, as *Copernicus* and his Followers; or part round the Sun, and part round the Earth, as *Tycho Brahe* suppos'd, 'tis much the same to me: it being a constant Truth, that the Comets always appear in a part of the World where there are Bodys which move round a common Center; by consequence these Bodys endeavour with all their might to get at the greatest distance from this Center, and have more force to remove off than all those Bodys which lie between them and the Earth. From whence it follows that the Matter round the Comets has no such easy task in descending upon the Earth, and that 'tis altogether as hard for it to get down thither, as for the terrestrial Matter to climb up to Heaven. Did we consider the difficulty of forcing a Bladder under Water, we shou'd not universally affirm, 'tis harder to ascend than descend: This is true in relation to those Bodys

only which have no power of themselves to remove from the Center of Motion; but as to those which have had the force of removing themselves at a prodigious distance, 'tis in making them descend, that all the stress and difficulty lies. Seeing therefore the Comets lie at immense spaces from the Center of Motion, we may reasonably conclude 'twou'd be an inconceivable difficulty to force any thing from such a height to the Earth; which alone is sufficient to confute all the Illusions of Astrology.

Suffer me now, Sir, to say, That all the Matter from hence to the Heights beyond *Saturn*, and the Heaven of the Comets, forms but one vast Vortex: and permit me to call this the Vortex of the Sun. I don't desire this with a design to do the least prejudice to your *Ptolomean* System, but only to express in fewer words what I am to advance.

SECT. XIV. *That the Exhalations of the Comets, even allowing they might reach as far as the Earth, cou'd produce no Effect there.*

ALLOW that the Comets did discharge a great quantity of Exhalations as far as the Earth; does it therefore follow that Mankind must be sensibly affected by 'em? By no means; for if these Exhalations pass thro Spaces so immense as those between us, 'tis to be suppos'd they are broken by the way, and fin'd into an infinite number of small insensible Particles, which must spread themselves over the whole extent of the Vortex of the Sun, almost in the same manner as Particles of Salt distribute themselves
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to the whole mass of Water in which it is dissolv'd. Now if we compare the Comet with the whole Vortex of the Sun, it is not, in proportion to this Vortex, so much as a grain of Salt to a piece of Water of a league square. And there's consequently ground to believe, that if the whole Comet prepar'd in a Powder, were infus'd in the vast Vortex of the Sun, it wou'd cause no more alteration, than the grain of Salt cast into such a square of Water wou'd produce in the whole Substance of the Element. Every body is sensible that in order to any Liquor's producing a considerable Effect, it is not sufficient that it be barely impregnated with certain Spirits, but it must be also fill'd with these Spirits to a certain degree. I say likewise, that to the end our Air receive any extraordinary alteration, it is not enough that it be impregnated with a certain parcel of the Comet, in proportion to the rest of the Matter contain'd in the whole extent of the Vortex; but it must of necessity receive a much larger Dose. And yet 'tis evident it can have no more than its share; I don't mean of the whole Comet, for that we know is not dissolv'd in the Liquid of the Vortex, but of the loose Corns only which she shakes off before and behind, and which amount as 'twere to nothing at all for every part of the Universe.

I'm in no great pain about your objecting that no other part besides the Earth is under the influence of Comets: for this were supposing that the Comets consign to her alone their whole stock of Exhalations, and take care that their Streams meet with no diversion in a passage of such prodigious length; which can never be said without

the greatest extravagance. As little do I fear your telling me, that perhaps the Comets are not quite so far from the Earth as they suppose, who place 'em vastly beyond *Saturn*; for this Objection is of no force against me: Place 'em a little above, or a little below *Saturn*, their Evaporations must belong in common to all the parts of the Vortex of the Sun, as well to those which lie between *Jupiter* and *Mars*, as to those which surround the Earth; as well to the parts beyond, as to those o' this side *Saturn*. Upon the whole, if a Comet standing between *Jupiter* and *Mars*, has force enough to shoot the Matter with which it is encompass'd from thence to the Center, it ought to have force enough to shoot it very near as far on the side of the Circumference: For the Difficulty can't be conceiv'd greater in forcing heavy Bodys upwards, than those which are light downwards, as appears by the Experiment on a Bladder, which 'tis so difficult to force under Water. Thus we ought to conceive, that the streamings from the Body of a Comet diffuse themselves around thro the whole extent of the Vortex of the Sun, in the same manner as the Particles of a small lump of Sugar held hanging in a Glass of Water, communicate themselves above and below thro the whole capacity of the Glass, but with so much the more ease, as the Matter of the Vortex is in a continual flux. Seeing therefore the intire Comet dissolv'd in the Fluid of the Vortex, wou'd not be as a grain of Salt dissolv'd in a league square of Water, a proportion in which I presume neither Antimony, nor the strongest Poisons retain their operating Qualitys; 'tis most certain that the Influences of the Comets,

mets, which are so small a matter in comparison with the bulk of the Comet it self, cou'd be capable of no considerable Action, allowing they reacht as far as our Earth.

SECT. XV. *A Confutation of those who say the thing is not impossible, or who wou'd maintain that the Influences are not Bodys.*

LAST of all, will you say, That 'tis not impossible but the Comets may discharge some kind of Effluvium or active Quality upon the Earth? This is the utmost that can be said with any colour of Reason; and yet it comes to nothing, because 'tis not only possible, but highly probable that the Comets convey no Quality at all hither, nor Matter capable of a considerable Action: and in all Cases where the Reasons are no stronger of one side than another, the danger lies at his door who affirms, rather than at his who suspends his Judgment. Much more then, there being no positive Reason to incline men to the belief of Influences from the Comets, and a great many Reasons on the contrary which induce 'em to reject it, they who make up the former Party, have all the Injustice in the World on their side.

Be pleas'd, Sir, to take notice, that I make a distinction between the Qualitys produc'd by Comets, and the Particles or small Bodys which flow from 'em. I made the distinction o' purpose to sute my Language to the Philosophy of the Schools; and for fear you might be led to believe my Objections of no force, if I went on the common Principles concerning the Pro-

pagation of Accidents. To prevent this, I here declare, that tho in the course of this Argument I confute the Influences of Comets under no other Notion than that of Atoms, or a subtle Matter flowing from 'em, yet I pretend that my Reasons shall be altogether as conclusive against those Influences which might result from pure Qualitys, consider'd as distinct from the Matter it self. And in the present Case I shou'd have much a better lay on't against a Peripatetick than any other Philosopher, because if he reasons consistently, he must grant me that the moment the Comet disappears, the malignant Qualitys it had produc'd from without, are intirely extinguisht by the substantial form of each reigning Subject, which will not tolerate, according to his Philosophy, any foreign Quality, longer than the Cause which introduc'd it at first by violence, stands by and maintains its ground. From whence it plainly results, that whatever happens after the departure of the Comet, can't be owing to its Qualitys, but to its Atoms at most which it has scatter'd here and there.

Besides that Experience teaches us, that the Qualitys of Bodys are not produc'd, except within a certain space, which they call the *Sphere of their Activity*, 'tis also as absurd upon *Aristotle's* Principles to say, that the Comet communicates its Qualitys to the whole Vortex of the Sun, as to maintain this upon any other Philosophy: since *Aristotle's* Followers are oblig'd to confess, that what they call *pure Accidents*, are as hard to be spread all around the Vortex, as the Effluvia of the Body it self, in which the other Sects of Philosophers place the Essence of their bodily Qualitys.

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SECT. XVI. II Reason, *That if the Comets had the power of producing any thing at all upon Earth, they might as well produce Good as Evil.*

ONE may alledg in the second place, That supposing the Comets emitted a great quantity of small Particles capable of a considerable Action, yet there's no more reason to conclude they shou'd cause a Pestilence, a War, or a Famine, than that they shou'd bring Health, Peace and Plenty, because no body knows the nature of these minute Bodys, the Figure, Motion or Texture of their Parts. And in good earnest, is there any better sense in maintaining, that the present Comet, which prevents not an excessive cold Season while in its full appearance, shall cause a War three years hence when it self is no more, because, by overheating the Mass of Blood, it will render Mankind more enterprizing; than in maintaining it will preserve a good understanding and peace in the World, because by cooling the Mass of Blood it will render Mankind very wise and moderate?

Yes you'l tell me, There's much more Reason and good Sense in one than in the other, because 'tis more probable that a gross Matter drawn off from the extremity of the Sun's Vortex, and no way congenious to terrestrial Bodys, shou'd contribute to raise a Ferment, and set all things here out of order, than that it shou'd beget or promote any favourable dispositions.

It's highly probable, you'l say, That it increases the Cold in Winter, and the Heat
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in Summer; because, being harder to be agitated, 'tis natural for it to increase the cold and numness of Bodys, at Seasons when there is not strength enough in the Sun to put it into motion; and being once inflam'd, to retain a greater degree of heat than subtler Matter: as red hot Iron burns fiercer than the Flames of the strongest Spirits, and Fire is violentest when the Weather is sharpest; for this reason, because the ambient Cold gives the substance of the Fuel such a consistence, that the Particles separated by the motion of the Fire are more solid and massy than ordinary.

But in return I say, these are all random guesses, and one might reason altogether as plausibly from these Principles in behalf of the contrary Opinion. Who can bar my saying, That this gross Matter choking the Air, and favoring a condensation of the Vapors, ought in reason to temper the Heats and the Colds in the several Seasons of the Year; the Cold, because 'tis never more violent than when the Air is most serene and (a) pure; the Heat, because it's never more insupportable than when the Sun darts its bright Beams upon us without meeting any Clouds to intercept 'em; and because the Clouds arising from a condensation of the Vapors cool and refresh the Air extremely? I can suppose farther, that this droffy Matter coming once to precipitate, leaves a ferment and fatness, which renders the Soil exceeding fertile, like the Slime which the Nile bestows upon *Egypt* when it overflows its

(a) Et positas ut glaciēt nives, puro numine Jupiter. *Horat. Od. 10. lib. 3.*

Banks. A third Person may say with as much reason as either of us, that in reality this gross Matter brings a piercing Cold, which purges the Air of all Seeds of Distempers, but then it fines by little and little; the grosser Sediment falling to the Earth, and fattening and filling it with Principles of Fecundity, whilst the floating Particles retain only the necessary solidity for tempering the Heats by a condensation of the Vapors, and by Showers equally conducive to the Health and the Harvest. Who can hinder another's saying, that this foul Matter has time enough to filtrate and fine, before it comes to our hands, in a passage of several millions of Leagues; and tho' some grosser parts of it shou'd happen to force thro' and mix with our Air, yet they ought no more to be regarded than one of our Fogs, which lasts sometimes seven or eight days without any ill Consequence; or one of those heavy Showers which trouble the Water in Rivers, without distempering the Fish in 'em, as far as we can find?

SECT. XVII. III Reason, *That Astrology, which is the Foundation of particular Predictions from the Comets, is most ridiculous.*

IN the third place I affirm, that the whole Detail of the Presages from Comets turning intirely upon the Principles of Astrology, can't but be extremely ridiculous; because there never was such a piece of Impertinence, never any thing so chimerical as Astrology, never so great a Scandal upon human Nature, to whose eternal shame
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be it spoken, there have been Men among us, some Cheats enough to practise upon the rest, under a pretence of knowing the Secrets of Heaven; and some Sots enough to give intire credit to the Cheat, to that degree as to erect the Employment of an Astrologer into a Charge in the State, and not presume to put on a new Sute of Clothes, or plant a Tree in one's Garden, without the (a) Astrologer's Approbation.

Wou'd you know from a Man of this Profession what in particular are the Presages of such or such a Comet? He tells you; That the particular Influence of any Comet depends upon the quality of the Sign, or the House in which it was first observ'd, as also upon its Aspect and Conjunction with the Planets: That one must have principal regard to the Situation, to take the Horoscope of a Comet aright; to which he adds the consideration of the Signs thro which it passes successively. Hereupon he informs you, that there are Male Signs and Female Signs, Terrestrial and Aqueous, Hot and Cold, Diurnal and Nocturnal, &c. that each Planet reigns over a certain Portion of the Earth, and over a certain Species of People and Things: *Saturn*, for example, reigns over *Bavaria*, *Saxony*, *Spain*, over a part of *Italy*, over *Ravenna* and *Ingolstadt*, over the *Moors* and the *Jews*; over Lakes, Common-shores, and Church-yards; over old Age, over the Vapors and Spleen; over Black and Tan Colour, and over Sour: for they deal all things formally among'em to the very Colors and Savors. He adds, that the Signs, particularly those of the Zodiack, have

(b) Mr. Bernier Relat. du Mogol.

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their Districts also appointed 'em on the Terrestrial Globe, within which they are to exercise their respective Functions: The *Ram*, for example, reigns over all things subject to the Planet *Mars* (for you must take this along with you, that every Planet has a certain Lodging at one Sign or other) which are the *North*, a part of *Italy* and *Germany*, *England*, and the Capital of *Poland*; the *Liver*, *Gall*, *Foot-Soldiers*, *Butchers*, *Bailiffs*, *Hangmen*, *Red*, *Bitter* and *Biting*. Besides this he reigns over *Palestine* and *Armenia*, over the *Red Sea*, over *Burgundy*, over the Citys of *Metz* and *Marseilles*. He'l tell you farther, there are Twelve Houses to be consider'd in the Heavens, each of which has its particular Functions, and belongs to a particular Planet: For example; The first House relates to the Life, and to the Complexion of the Body; and the last House to Enemies, Prison, and the Trustiness of Servants. *Mercury* delights in the first House more than any other Planet, and from thence bestows a fortunate Life, and a strong Complexion. *Venus* delights in the fifth House, where she promises Joy and Blessing in Children.

These Principles laid down, with many more of the same kind, the Astrologer proceeds to tell you what Country, or what People, or what Cattel the Comet has a grudge to, and with what kind of Evils it threatens 'em: In the *Ram* the Comet portends dreadful Wars, and dreadful Mortality, the humbling the Great, and exalting the Low, fearful Droughts in the Places subject to this Sign: In *Virgo* dangerous Abortions and Miscarryings, Taxes, Imprisonment, Barrenness and a Mortality among Women: In *Scorpio*, beside
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some of the foregoing Evils, it portends Vermin and Locusts innumerable: In *Pisces*, Disputes about points of Faith, frightful Apparitions in the Air, War, Pestilence, and always the Death of great Men.

If by ill Luck the Comet happens to steer its Course by the Signs which have a human Form, as *Gemini, Virgo, Orion, &c.* Mankind is then the Object of its Wrath: If it passes by the Sign of the *Ram*, the *Bull*, the *Swan*, the *Eagle, Pisces, &c.* these several kinds of Animals are chiefly in its Eye; and if the Signs be Male, the Males are to suffer; if Female, the Females. If the Comets move by the secret Parts of a Sign or Constellation, 'tis a sad presage to Whores and Whoremongers; if the Comet be Saturnine by its Aspect or Situation, it communicates all the ill humor of *Saturn*, Jealousy, Melancholy, Distrust, and panick Fear: If it goes into the second House, which is that of Riches, it puts a stop to honest Gain, prompts People to Robberys, Bankrupcy, &c. For in the main the Astrologer judges of the influence of his Comet by the Rules, according to which he pretends that such or such a Sign, in such a House, and in such an Aspect, might of it self presage this or that, to this thing or that thing (c).

They very seldom make a Comet promise any Goodness; yet there was a *Swiss* Astrologer in the Year 1661. who observing that the Comet which then appear'd pass'd by the Sign of the *Eagle*, and dy'd away at its Feet, affirm'd that this presag'd the Overthrow of the *Ottoman* Em-

(c) See Mr. Petir's *Dissertat. upon Comets*, p. 95.

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pire by the *German*; which the Event was so far from justifying, that two Years after the *Turk* had like to have carry'd the Kingdom of *Hungary*, and in all probability had enter'd the Hereditary Countrys of the House of *Austria* with Fire and Sword, if the Succours which the King sent his Imperial Majesty had not put him in a condition to make his Peace with the Port. It happens with the Predictions of Astrologers and Poets much alike: They are always fatal to the *Turkish* Greatness, and always come to nothing; for above an Age past the *French* Poets have been founding in the deep Base of Oracle, that our Kings shall go to dethrone the *Great Turk*, and raise Trophys on the Banks of *Jordan* and *Euphrates*. The formidable Mr. *Des-Preaux*, who had ridicul'd these Sallys for a long time, is at last fallen into 'em himself, with his *Je t'attens dans deux ans aux bords de l'Hellepont*, and has prov'd as false a Prophet as any of his Brethren.

Yet your Astrologers making their Judgments upon such Extravagances, is no new thing, nor of yesterday; 'twas the very same in the days of *Pliny*. They pretend, says (d) this Author, that it's no indifferent matter to what Quarter the Comets dart their Rays, or from what Stars they derive their Virtues, or what things they resemble, or in what part of the Heavens they are seen: if the Comet resembles a Flute, their Presages relate to Musick; when they stand in the secret Parts of a Sign, they presage Mischances to the Unchast; if their Situation forms a Triangle, or equilateral Quadrangle, with respect to

(d) Plin. lib. 2. cap. 25.

the fixt Stars, 'tis to Sciences, and to the human Understanding they address themselves. They shed rank Poison when they lie in the Head of the *North* or the *South Dragon*.

Consider, Sir, I pray you, whether 'tis not renouncing all Shame and Sincerity to advance Principles of this kind. What! because a Comet, as it appears to us, answers to a certain number of Stars, which the Antients thought fit to call the Sign *Virgo*, in compliance with the poetical Fiction concerning the flight of Justice, or the Virgin *Astræa* (e) into Heaven, disgusted at a world of so much Iniquity as ours; therefore our Women shall be barren, or they shall have frequent Miscarriages, or they shall die Maids? I know nothing in the World hangs so ill together.

'Tis only the Excess of Caprice cou'd ever represent this Sign in the figure of a Woman; for in reality it resembles the Human no more than any other Figure which you please to fancy. But allow it had something of a Human Form, have we Eyes good enough, with the help of our best Telescopes, to discern whether it resembles a Woman rather than a Man? And might we carry our Discoverys to such a point, how can we be assur'd 'tis the Figure of a Maid rather than a marry'd Woman? And after all, when we shou'd make out these nice Distinctions, and plainly perceive that a certain number of Stars situated so and so do exactly resemble the Figure of a Maiden; must it therefore follow they communicate to a Body at thirty Millions of Leagues distance, Influences opposite to the propagation of

(e) *Astræa virgo Siderum magnum decus. Seneca in Oſav. Mankind?*

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Mankind? 'Twere infinitely more reasonable to advance such a piece of Impertinence as this, *That shou'd a Baker mould a bit of Dow in the Figure of a Man or a Woman, 'twou'd turn to rank Poison, and kill all the Men or Women that tasted of it.* All indeed that the Astrologers advance, very richly deserves the Censure we meet with in *Pliny* (f) upon another sort of Liars: To offer such things in serious earnest, shews the greatest contempt of Mankind, and the most scandalous Impunity of Lying.

I shan't amuse my self with formal Proofs of what I advance so confidently against the vanity of judicial Astrology; for, beside that you doubt not the Truth of what I say upon this Head, I'm sensible there's a vast number of fine Treatises upon the Subject, which detect the Falseness and Imposture of this wretched Art in the most convincing manner imaginable. I don't believe ever any body took up the Cudgels against Astrologers, who did not presently confound 'em, and who might not say of this Dispute, what the Romans said of *Africk*, *That 'twas a Harvest of Triumphs to them.* If there be any Author who has drawn his Pen against Astrology, without striking it dead, he has undoubtedly perform'd a difficult Exploit, and which might entitle him to a considerable Pension under a Prince of the Emperor *Galienus's* Humour, who judg'd the Prize to a certain Knight of his Court, because having enter'd the Lists with the Bull, he had run him up and down for a long time without giving him the

(f) Hæc serio quenkum dixisse summa hominum contemtio est, & intoleranda mendaciorum impunitas. *Plin. lib. 37. cap. 2.*

least Wound, which *Galienus* (g) look'd upon as a Deed of rare Merit: So that the confounding Astrology was not really a Task for so prodigious a Genius as the Count of *Mirandola*; a lower Wit had done. 'Twas imploying the Bow and Arrows of *Hercules* to shoot Larks, as *Philoctetes* did during the War of *Troy*; and fighting an Eagle against a Fly. And 'tis very probable the Count himself did not think Astrology big enough for his Resentments, but because, absurd as it is, he saw Persons of the highest Rank keep it in countenance by their Example and Application: These are they who are most prying into Futurity, their Ambition filling 'em with an extreme Impatience to know what great things Fortune has ordain'd for 'em, and rather than fail, to possess in vain Promises the Elevation they aspire after. 'Tis very likely too the Astrologers of his own time waited till their great Adversary was actually dead, to foretel he should die exactly at 32 Years of Age: for it is not prudence in 'em to threaten Persons who write publicly against Astrology; witness the Astrologer who foretold that Mr. *Gassendi*, who treated the Judiciary Art with much Scorn, shou'd die precisely the latter end of *July*, or the beginning of *August* 1650 (h), and had the mortification to see him just then recover of a Distemper, upon which 'tis probable his Prediction was founded, more than upon the Information of the Stars.

(g) Toties Taurum non ferire difficile est. *Trebel. Pollio in vita Gall.*

(h) Morin. See Mr. Bernier's *Abridg. of Gassend. Tom.* I V. pag. 489.

SECT. XVIII. Of the Credit of Astrology
among the antient Pagans.

BUT it mayn't be unserviceable to shew, that Astrology, tho the poorest of all Impositions, has yet maintain'd a kind of Dominion all along in the World. It appears from several Passages of Scripture (*i*), that the Court of the Kings of *Babylon* swarm'd with Astrologers, who deliver'd their Predictions in publick, and fill'd their Nation with a thousand false Expectations. There were numbers of 'em in *Egypt*: They infatuated the People of *Rome* to that degree, that the Prince was often forc'd to restrain this grand Abuse by his Authority; yet the Edicts for their Banishment were so ill executed, that one of their Historians (*k*) takes occasion to remark, that the Astrologers were a Generation of Men always forbad the City, and always courted to it. Not but the falseness of their Predictions was abundantly sufficient to disgrace 'em: for the Emperor *Claudius* alone, whom they incessantly threaten'd with the fatal Hour, had given 'em the Lie so often, that *Seneca* is forc'd to introduce *Mercury*, praying the Destinys to suffer the Astrologers to tell Truth at last. But what will you have on't? Men love to be deluded, and therefore are ready to forget all the times the Astrologer fails, and remember those alone when his Predictions were thought to be true.

(*i*) *Isaiah*, Chap. 44. & 47. (*k*) *Genus hominum potentibus infidum, sperantibus fallax, quod in civitate nostra & terabitur semper & retinebitur. Tac.*

This was very justly observ'd by our *Harry*, the Great: Not a Year pass'd, not a Month, but the Astrologers denounc'd the terrible Sentence of his Death. "They must tell Truth at last," says this Prince; and the People will remember the single time their Prediction proves true, and forget all the times they were false. The same Observation has been made by others upon the Oracles of *Delphos*: People got those by heart which happen'd right, and repeated 'em on all occasions; but they forgot, at least they pass'd over in silence, all that were wrong. The Partizans of *Apollo* improv'd the few Oracles in which he was not mistaken, but never said a word of the vast numbers of false. As for those who despis'd all Oracles, they never troubled their Heads about the true or false, except a very few of the humour of an illustrious Greek Philosopher, *Oenomaus*, who, piqu'd at being so often fool'd by *Apollo's* Answers (1), made a spiteful large Collection of his Oracles, and expos'd the Folly and Falshood of each of 'em in particular. The Mind of Man being thus turn'd, we are not to wonder that the Astrologers kept their Ground, notwithstanding the Laws for their Expulsion, and the ill Offices they were continually doing themselves, by telling things which never came to pass. We shou'd only stand amaz'd to see Men so weak, as to be deceiv'd over and over by a Set of Wretches who daily deceive themselves. This appear'd astonishing to that Great Roman, who liv'd to see the Fate of *Pompey*, *Cæsar*, and *Crassus*, directly contrary to

(1) Euseb. Prepar. Evangel. lib. 5. cap. 10.

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what the Astrologers had foretold (q). How few do take that good Man's meaning right, who blest the beautiful *Daphne*; because, by balking *Apollo* in his amorous Intrigues, that God who knows ev'ry thing to come, she had sufficiently confuted the Superstition of Oracles. But let's adjourn the Moral, and content our selves with this, That Pagan Antiquity shamefully suffer'd it self to be made the Sport of Astrologers.

SECT. XIX. *Of the Reputation of Astrology among the Infidels of this Age.*

THE Mahometans and Modern Pagans are ten times more so. Mr. *Bernier* in his account of the Great Mogul's Dominions, informs us, that the most part of the People of *Asia* are so bewicht to Judicial Astrology, as never to undertake any Business without consulting their Astrologers. When two Armys are in sight, and ready to ingage, they use their utmost Conduct not to charge, till the Astrologer has calculated the propitious Minute. So when they are to chuse a General, to appoint an Embassy, to conclude a Marriage, to begin a Journy, or even to go about the smallest Matters, as buying a Slave, or putting on a new Sute of Clothes, nothing is done without the Advice of Mr. Astrologer.

(q) Quam multa ego Pompeio, quam multa Crasso, quam multa huic ipsi Cæsari a Chaldæis dicta memini, neminem eorum nisi senectute, nisi domi, nisi cum claritate esse moriturum: ut mihi permirum videatur, quemquam extare qui etiam nunc credat iis, quorum prædicta quotidie videat re & eventis refelli.

Cicero lib. 2. de Divin.

Monfieur (a) *Tavernier* fays much the fame of the *Persians*, That they reverence the *Aftrologers* as an extraordinary fort of Men; that they confult 'em as Oracles; that the King has three or four always about his Perfon, to mind him of the lucky or unlucky Moment: That they difperfe a new Almanack every Year thro the Kingdom of *Persia*, ftuff with Predictions of the Wars, the Sicknefs or Scarcity that's to happen in that Year; with Directions which are the fitteft Days to bleed in, to purge, to begin a Journey, to put on new Clothes, and fuch other Affairs: That the *Persians* pin their Faith upon this Almanack, infomuch that whoever has one of 'em by him, does for that whole Year govern himfelf abfolutely by it. They carry'd this Folly to fuch an excefs, that in the Year (b) 1667. *Cha-Sepfi* King of *Persia*, and Second of the Name, defpairing of the recovery of his Health by the Care or Skill of his Phyficians, the People began to conclude the *Aftrologers* wholly in fault, by not being skilful enough to chufe the critical Moment when the King mounted the Throne, and therefore the Buſinefs muſt be done over again. Hereupon the Phyficians and *Aftrologers* laying their Heads together, and agreeing on a propitious Hour, the Ceremony of the Coronation was repeated, and 'twas e'en thought neceſſary to change the King's Name. His Phyficians in ordinary were the occaſion of this Comedy: for fearing the diſgrace which ſome

(a) *Travels, Part I. B. 5. Ch. 14.*

(b) *Ibid. Ch. 1.*

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of their Body were already fall'n under, they be-
thought 'em of justifying Physick at the expence
of Astrology; and confidently affirm'd, that
the King's Sickness, and the Dearth which afflicted
the Kingdom at the same time, proceeded from
the ignorance of the Astrologers, which they of-
fer'd to prove, pretending to as much skill in
Futurity as Astrologers themselves. Their Pro-
position taking with the King and Council, they
order'd an extraordinary Consultation of Astro-
logers and Physicians, to fix a favourable Hour
for the King's second Coronation: and here the
matter rested. What a delicious Subject were
this for *Moliere*! a Consultation between A-
strologers and Physicians about the Good of
the State! What a world of Raillery might this
Hint furnish, to see the Quacks call the Conju-
rers to their assistance! Yet this is no subject of
Raillery in *Persia*: A Man there who sets up for
knowledg in future Events, makes himself a Mi-
nister of State, and Master of the King's Con-
duct. A Figure of Geomancy in the High-way,
made the Great (c) *Cha-Abas*, full as he was of
Fire and Resolution, wait three whole days at the
Gates of *Ispahan*, without presuming to set foot
in the City.

The (d) Accounts of *China* inform us, That
all the weighty Affairs of that Empire are re-
solv'd by Astronomical Observations, the Empe-
ror undertaking nothing without first consulting
his Horoscope; and that there are Persons whose
proper Imployment 'tis to contemplate the Stars

(c) Pietro della Valle lett. 6.

(d) See the Embassy of the Dutch Company, Part 2. Ch. 2.

all night from some high Hill, and report their motions and meanings to the Prince. The *Chinese* have a very particular regard to this rare Precept of Astrology, not to purge while the Moon is in the Sign of the Bull; because the Bull being of that kind of Beasts which chew the Cud, the Portion 'tis fear'd might come up again under such a Conjunction. A wretcheder Conceit never enter'd sure into the Brain of Man; for beside that the Sign of the Bull in the Heavens has no resemblance or relation to the Beast of the same Name any more than to a Tree, and that there might be altogether as much reason for bestowing the Name and Figure of a Saint upon each Sign, and some Writers have done so, as the Name and Figure of any thing else: Besides this, I say, 'tis well known the Sign of the Bull is not in the same Place in the Heavens now as it was of old: So that when we say the Sun or the Moon is in the Sign of the Bull, we mean, not that either of 'em answers to the Stars themselves which compose this Constellation, but to those Points of the *Primum Mobile* to which it had a relation heretofore. The *Chinese* likewise pretend, that they who build Houses, shou'd beware of the fourth Degree of *Scorpio*, because a House built under such an Aspect is very subject to be infested with Dragons, Scorpions, and Vermin. From whence we may presume, they take the Horoscope of their Houses, as *Tarrutius Firmanus* did that of the City of *Rome*. And with all submission to *Cicero* and his Raillerys upon this Head, if the Signs of the Heavens have any Influence at the birth of a Man, I see no reason they shou'd not
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at the building of a House (e). In Japan they have a Notion that it conduces much to the durability of a Structure, and the prosperity of those who are to dwell in't, if when they are laying the Foundation, any body is so kind as to kill himself out of good will to the Undertaking. The *Tunquinois* have a particular Idol, to which they offer Sacrifice when they are about to build a House. So by these Principles, the Circumstances in the beginning of a Building have a wonderful influence on its future good Fortune: Wherefore then may'nt their Astrologers make a Judgment of the good Fortune of a House from the Aspects in the Heavens, or the Ascendent under which the first Stone was laid? Almost all the Nations of the *East-Indies* have a senseless Passion for Astrology, as well as the *Chinese*.

SECT. XX. *The Reputation of Astrology among Christians.*

BUT where's the need of going so far out of our way into a Land of Infidels mop'd with Superstition and monstrous Error, or looking back to the days of antient Paganism, where it is no wonder Astrology shou'd prevail, since their Superstition was so prodigious, as to believe the Intrails of a Calf cou'd tell when was the true time for giving Battel, better than *Hannibal* with all his Experience, as this great Cap-

(e) Etiamne urbis natalis dies ad vim Stellarum & Lunæ pertinebit? fac in puero referre, ex qua affectione cœli primum spiritum duxerit, num hoc in latere aut in cœmento ex quibus urbs effecta est potuit valere? *Cicero l. 2. de Divin.*

tain himself agreeably reproacht (f) King *Prusias*? There's no necessity of beating about to find what we are in search of: for has not our own Western World, with all its Improvements and Lights of Christianity, been as much bewicht to Horoscopes for several Ages as they? *Albert* the great Bishop of *Ratisbon*, the Cardinal *d'Ailly*, and some others I cou'd name, have not they had the boldness to take the Horoscope of *JESUS CHRIST*, and pretend that the Aspects of the Planets at his Birth promis'd all those Miracles and mighty Works which so eminently distinguish'd his Person? Which is notoriously false, because the Power and Miracles of the Son of God were of an Order and Strain intirely supernatural. Have not they taken the Horoscopes, not only of all the false Religions of the World, but of the Christian too, and made Judgments of the Destiny of each from the Qualitys of its reigning Planet? For they have distributed the Planets among the Religions: The Sun is fall'n to the Lot of the Christian Religion, and for this reason it is we have Sunday in the highest regard: The City of *Rome* is a Solar City, and a Sanctify'd City; and the Cardinals residing there are cloth'd in Scarlet, the colour of the Sun. That such Jargon as this shou'd ever go unpunish'd, is 'nt it supposing that Men have liv'd in Ages possess'd with a profound veneration for Astrology? How many Christian Princes cou'd I name, who have regulated all their Motions by the Advice of Astrologers? (g) *Matthias Corvin*, King of Hun-

(f) Cicero, lib. 2. de Divin.

(g) Bonfinius Decad. 4. rerum Hungar. lib. 8.

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gary, who never undertook any thing without their Approbation; (b) *Lewis Sforza* Duke of *Milan*, who never begun the least Affair but at the Astrologer's hour, whose Instructions he observ'd with so much exactness, that neither Rain, nor Hail, nor Fog, nor Tempest, cou'd hinder his setting out on a Progress to reach the Place appointed him by his Astrologer; which yet did not prevent his falling into the hands of his Enemies, who kept him in hard Captivity to his dying day. So much Folly in a Christian Prince falls little short of that of the great *Cha-Abas*.

SECT. XXI. *Of the Credit of Astrology in France.*

WHAT shall I say to our own Country? Has not the time been, when the very Court of *France*, which being guarded against superstitious Practices by the intrinsic Character of the Nation, is less susceptible of Delusions of this kind than any other, has yet been overrun with Astrologers, who were sought to upon every trivial Occasion, and who 'twas pretended foretold things exactly as they came to pass? Father (i) *Martin Rio*, so eminent for his Learning and Piety, assures us that in the days of *Mary de Medicis*, the Ladys of the Court of *France* wou'd venture upon no kind of Affair without consulting their Astrologers, whom they call'd their Barons.

(b) Cardan. in Prol. de Astror. jud. lib. I. tex. 14. (i) Disquisit. magic. par. 2. quæst. 4. sect. 6.

The Evil got such head, that it was necessary not only to employ the Censures of the Church, but the Authority of the secular Arm, to restrain the reading of Almanacks, in which the Astrologers took the liberty of foretelling whatever they thought fit. Accordingly the Provincial Council (1) of *Bordeaux* in 1583. forbids the reading such Almanacks, or giving 'em any Countenance. That of *Tholouse* in 1590. enacts the same, requiring moreover a strict Observance of the Bull of *Sixtus V.* of the Year 1586. which enjoins the Ordinaries and Inquisitors to punish according to the Ecclesiastical Constitutions, all who take upon 'em to prognosticate. In the States of *Orleans* in 1560. and those of *Blois* 1579. it was enacted, that the Magistrates might proceed in an extraordinary way, and by corporal Inflictions, against the Authors of these Almanacks; and Proclamations were issu'd against printing or uttering 'em upon pain of Imprisonment, and Fine at the Magistrate's Discretion.

But all this did not discredit Astrology, for 'tis notorious that the Court of *Harry* the Fourth was never without store of Prophecys. Neither were they Women only, who from a Credulity and Curiosity peculiar to the Sex, went about to have their Fortunes told: the Men, and the bravest of Men did the same, if you'll allow *Marechal Biron* to be one, whom *Harry* the Fourth call'd the *cuttingest Instrument of his Victories*, when he sent him Ambassador into *England*, and who in reality was one of the resolute Spirits upon Earth, and thorowly acquainted with Books.

(1) See *Mr. Thier's Treatise of Superstitions*, chap. 22.

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Harry the Fourth, as much *Harry* the Great as he was, did not perceive the Vanity of this Art in all the stages of his Life, so clearly as towards his latter end. I find in the Memoirs of *Monf. de Sully*, that when his Queen was deliver'd of a Son, who since reign'd so gloriously with the Title of *Lewis* the Just, *Harry* the Great order'd his Physician *La Riviere*, a great Dealer in Horoscopes, to calculate that of the new-born Dauphin: the Physician desir'd to be excus'd, but was forc'd to obey; and tho he wou'd put off the matter from time to time on several pretences, the King at last commanded him positively, and upon pain of his Displeasure, to let him know what it promis'd, which at last he did. By little and little the Nation is cur'd of this Folly, whether it be that we naturally delight in change, or rather that a general Application to Philosophy in this last Age, has fortify'd Mens Reason, which all the fine Arts, cultivated with so much Glory ever since the Reign of *Francis* I. had not been able to deliver from the Slavery of Prejudices. This shou'd convince us, that there is but one sound Philosophy, which like *Hercules* is able to slay all the Monsters of popular Error; 'tis she alone can set us truly free.

SECT. XXII. *That the general Prejudice in behalf of Astrology disparages the Authority founded upon great Numbers only.*

DON'T you begin to think, Sir, that this is all Foreign, and Digression? Have a little Patience, you shall soon see it comes home to my purpose: for my chief Aim being to discredit the

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Authority founded upon Numbers only, I can't possibly have a better handle than by shewing that Astrology, which was never able to support it self by one Principle that has so much as a probability of its side, has notwithstanding had the good fortune to be receiv'd by the greatest part of Mankind, and in all Ages of the World. For as by the reverse of the Medal 'tis manifest, that tho Number and Multitude be on the side of Astrology, the belief given to its Predictions is false and ridiculous: so is it likewise manifest, that the Judgments founded upon Comets are to all intents null, let the number of Believers be ever so great, because they have no other Foundation beside the Principles of Astrology. Tho then you shou'd accuse me of falling into mere Common-place, I must notwithstanding insist, that considering the certain Experience of several Errors universally receiv'd, there's no single Person who has not a just right to be heard in behalf of his own Sentiment, with a Salvo for those who hear him to defend themselves to the last, not by any Pleas from Prescription, or the Prejudices of Numbers on their side, but by entring into the Grounds and Reasons of things. I always except, as you may well imagine, and as you certainly wou'd imagine, did I not take particular care to explain my self; I except, I say, all matters of Faith. In other matters, the only favor we can shew to Prescription and Numbers, is to give 'em the preference, where the Reasons in other respects are equal: tho were we to be decided by Prejudice only, I shou'd for my part think it stronger on the side of the single Person, than the Multitude; because plain

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(a) plain and simple Truths, being not so well fitted for exciting and gratifying the Passions, or moving Men by the various Interests which link 'em in Society, as some sort of false Opinions, there's more reason to conclude, that the Opinions which have prevail'd with the greatest part of the World are false, than to conclude they are true. But we shall speak to this Point at large in another place; let's now both by consent take breath for a while.

April 3. 1681.

SECT. XXIII. IV Reason, *That shou'd it be granted that Comets are always succeeded by signal Calamitys, yet we cou'd not therefore infer, that they have been either the Signs, or the Causes of these Calamitys.*

I Return to the Charge, Sir, and affirm in the fourth place, that tho in fact no Comet did ever appear which was not follow'd by a great many Calamitys, yet this proceeds intirely from the Nature of the things of this World, which renders 'em subject to an infinite variety of Changes: so that one may upon sure grounds ascribe the same Influence to any thing which comes next, as to the Marriage of a King, or the Birth of a Prince; because 'tis most certain that no King was ever born, or afterwards marry'd, but some extraordinary Disaster follow'd in some part or other of the World. In a word, there's as much probability, considering the ordinary course of

(a) Argumentum pessimi turba est.

human Affairs, that after any certain Year, which we please to pitch upon, there shall happen great Calamitys in some Country or other; as that at what hour soever a Citizen of *London* looks out of his Window towards *London-bridg*, he shall see Crouds of People following their Business that way: yet the Sight of this Citizen has no manner of Influence on the Passengers, but every one had past by whether he had lookt out or no. Even so the Comet has no Influence upon Events: all things had come to pass exactly as they did, tho no Comet had ever appear'd.

It's very amazing that a Tenet so destructive of the publick Peace shou'd yet have no better Foundation than a wretched Sophism, *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, where the Fallacy is obvious to every Schoolboy; and that there shou'd be so few among the Multitudes of the Book-learn'd, clear enough to perceive the Reasonings in this point, manifestly against the first Principles of good Sense. 'Tis somewhat strange too, that Men who wish they cou'd shake off all apprehensions of the future, shou'd give into so melancholy an Opinion without ever examining whether 'tis groundd upon Reason. But all these Subjects of Wonder vanish, when we consider the frame of the human Mind, and observe one general Rule in its Conduct, of judging upon all things from the first Impressions of Sense and Passion, without entring into Researches, more exact indeed, but then more painful too. Your Men of Books, who ought to be a Light to others, rather drive themselves with the Torrent, than endeavour to turn it into the Channel of the truly Learned.

SECT. XXIV. V Reason, *'Tis false, that more Evils have happen'd in the Years next succeeding Comets, than in other Years.*

BESIDES all this one may venture to lay down as Fact, 1. That computing what has pass'd either all the World over, or in any one of its general Divisions only, there have happen'd as many Evils in those Years which have neither seen nor succeeded a Comet in any reasonable time, as in those which have seen or succeeded it immediately. 2. That the Years we suppose poison'd by the Influence of Comets, are remarkable for as great Blessings to some parts of the World, as any other Years in the account of time. 3. That the most tragical Adventures, and terrible Desolations, have been preceded by no Comet at all, whereas the most memorable Prosperitys have. To say all in a word, we may advance as Fact, that if one takes the general History of the World, and makes a Computation of the Good and Evil which have happen'd in all parts for 15 or 20 Years together; he shall find that one with the other, the Sums of Good and Evil will come pretty near to the Sums of Good and Evil in the course of any other 15 or 20 Years: which shews that the Years succeeding Comets have nothing to distinguish 'em from the rest, and that 'tis the greatest Injustice to pretend Experience of your side.

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SECT. XXV. *Whether there be Lucky or Unlucky Days.*

ONE may make the same Observations in opposition to those, who pretend there are certain Times and Seasons appropriated to great Events. *Bodin*, who with all his Wit, and vast Learning, and little Religion, has discover'd a deal of superstitious Credulity, does upon this Principle trifle away some of his time in making a (b) Collection of several Revolutions, which happen'd all in the Month of *September*: I have but one word of Advice to him, and to all who spend their Time in Scrutinys of this kind, That they wou'd please to collect what has come to pass in the Climaterick Years of any State, or under the 21, 49, 63 King of any Kingdom, the 7 or 9 of any Name. My meaning is, that if they wou'd cull the other Seasons and Months of the Year with the same Care, or the several Reigns and Periods of a State; they may meet with Revolutions of a like kind in all indifferently, provided they lay by their Prevention, so long at least as they're making the Calculation: for 'tis pure Prevention only which blinds 'em. They are perswaded before hand, there are Months and Years favourable to great Events; hereupon they don't consult History, so much to examine whether their Persuasion be true, as to prove it is true: and one can hardly imagine how much Illusion is in this; thus it happens, that they observe the Facts which make for their purpose much

(b) *Bodin. de Republ. lib. 4. chap. 2.*

more attentively than those against 'em, and magnify or lessen the Nature of Events according to their Prepossessions. What is certainly true in relation to Months and Days, and Years and Numbers, is, that God has not appropriated to one more than another the Events which serve for the Punishment of Sinners, and for the Rise and Fall of Empires. This were an Affectation unworthy of the Greatness of God, and which can never be attributed to him, but by Minds overrun with Superstition, who think the Divine Providence wholly employ'd about those little Conceits which amuse 'em most. The Scripture and the Fathers declare against this Abuse, and 'tis false that History confirms the thing.

SECT. XXVI. *The Opinion of the Heathens about Lucky and Unlucky Days.*

I Don't deny that the Pagans believ'd there were particular Months and Days which carry'd something fatal in 'em, those for example, upon which the State perhaps had lost a memorable Battel; and upon this Principle they forbore any Enterprize upon these Months and Days. The 24th of *February* in the Bissextile Years was reckon'd so unlucky, that (c) *Valentinian* being elected Emperor upon it, durst not appear in publick for fear of suffering the Fatality of the Day: whether he was still engag'd in his Superstition as to this point, how good a Christian soever in the main; or whether in Policy he wou'd not expose

(c) *Ammian. Marcell. lib. 26. cap. 1.*

himself upon that day, for fear the People might fancy him an unfortunate Man. I know there are Days too upon which Generals of Armys have constantly had the Favors of Fortune. (d) *Timoleon* won all his famous Battels upon his Birth-day. (e) *Solyman* won the Battel of *Mohac*, and took the Fortrefs of *Belgrade*, and according to some Historians the Isle of *Rhodes*, and the Town of *Buda*, on the 29th of *August*. But I know too, this is no Argument that God has annex'd Favors to any one Day more than another.

SECT. XXVII. *A Confutation of the Pagan Opinion.*

FOR, 1. We find the same Day lucky and unlucky to the same People. *Ventidius* at the head of a *Roman* Army routed the *Parthians*, and slew their young King *Pacorus* who commanded 'em, the same Day that *Crassus* another *Roman* General had been slain, and his whole Army cut in pieces by the same People. *Lucullus* having attack'd *Tigranes* King of *Armenia*, notwithstanding the vain Scruples of his Officers, who desir'd him to beware fighting upon that day which was put down in the *Roman* Calendar among the unfortunate, ever since the fatal Overthrow of the *Romans* by the *Cimbri*: (f) *Lucullus*, I say, despising the Superstition, gain'd one of the most memorable Battels recorded in the *Roman* Story, and chang'd the Destiny of the Day, as he promis'd those who wou'd have dissuaded him from the Enterprize.

(d) *Corn. Nepos* in ejus vita. (e) *Du Verdier Hist. des Turcs.* (f) *Plutarch.* in ejus vitâ.

All the World knows, that *Valentinian's* unlucky Day was that on which *Charles V.* another *Roman* Emperor promis'd himself the best good Fortune.

Besides, we know that the good Success of Princes upon certain Days is not the mere Caprice of Fortune, which affects to bestow her Favors at one time more than another; but the Consequence of their preferring certain Days for undertaking the most important matters. Thus *Timoleon* fancying the Day on which he came into the World was lucky to him, chose it for the Day of his Battels, and attackt his Enemys upon it with the greater Confidence of Success; and without doubt did not forget to raise his Soldiers hopes of Victory by it. The Soldiers confiding in the good Fortune of *Timoleon*, fought more obstinately than otherwise perhaps they wou'd. *Timoleon* on his part omitted nothing to render the Happiness of his Birth-day more and more illustrious, of which he foresaw he might make great Advantage in time to come. There's nothing therefore extraordinary in his being victorious on this Day, or that once possessing his Soldiers with an Opinion that this was his Favourite Day, they shou'd always after engage upon't with that Ardor and Assurance, which is one of the principal Pledges of Victory. To which we may likewise add, that the Enemy are in some Consternation, when they find themselves attackt under Omens favorable to the Aggressor. It appears by the History of *Solyman*, that the Opinion with which he had inspir'd his Troops for the 29th of *August*, made him commonly pitch upon this Day, either for a general Assault or a Battel; and that he took more than ordinary Care to dispose things so, as

to carry his point upon this Day, to confirm his Men in their good Opinion, and make his own Use on't upon other Occasions. We ought not to think it strange then, that he had great Successes upon the 29th of *August*.

SECT. XXVIII. *How it comes to pass that Battels are won upon certain fancy'd Days.*

IN a word, the lucky or unlucky Events of a Nation, observ'd to happen upon particular Days, are not peculiar to these Days by any thing intrinsick in the Nature of 'em, or antecedent to human Choice; but depend mainly upon the Passions which the Circumstances of Time and Place serve to kindle in the Minds of Men, and the Address made use of for working up these Passions to a due pitch. Thus a General lays hold of the Circumstances of Time and Place to animate his Troops; he puts 'em in mind, that upon this Day, suppose in such a Year, or in this very Field of Battel, the Enemy were beaten once before; that they must now maintain the Honor of the Nation: In the mean time the opposite General exhorts his Troops to retrieve the Dishonor of the Day, to avenge the *Manes* of their Countrymen, whose Bones lie unbury'd before their Eyes. Thus you see how it happens that one beats his Enemy three or four times successively upon the same Day, or the same spot of Ground, or alternately beats and is beaten. All this depends next under God upon our Address in chusing the proper time for working upon the Passions. Now as the Birth of a Prince, a Victory, &c. turn indifferently upon any Day whatever of the Year,
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we may conclude, there's neither Month nor Day peculiarly assign'd to good or to evil Events: and tho this were not universally true with respect to Days, because some there may be very remarkable, and which strike upon the Passions in an extraordinary manner; yet you ought to allow, that as to Years which succeed the Appearance of Comets, they're by no means appropriated to the Punishment of Sinners, since 'tis impossible to demonstrate it from matter of Fact or Experience.

SECT. XXIX. *What are we to say in Answer to those who bring Examples to prove the Presages of Comets.*

'TIS true indeed your common Historians alledg a World of Calamitys hapning soon after the Appearance of Comets, without taking the least notice of any publick Prosperitys observable at the same time. For example, they give a long Catalogue of the Wars in *Europe*, from 1618. to the Peace of *Munster*; and place all this long train of Miserys to the Account of the Comet which appear'd that Year, but mention no publick Blessing within that time. But beside that this is stretching the Power of Comets too far; that what they call an Evil has produc'd an extraordinary Advantage to the greatest part of *Christendom*, hereby deliver'd from the Danger of losing its Liberty: besides all this, I say, who does not see, that if once we give way to these Collectors of Examples, we must take all the little vulgar Superstitions, and all old Wives Storys for current? there not being an old

Grannam but shall tell you, with a thousand impertinent Circumstances, of the Death of twenty or thirty of her Acquaintance within a Year after the Day they had made the thirteenth at Table; and a world of Vexations which have follow'd in the Family upon spilling the Salt, without remembering any party of Pleasure, or piece of good Luck to ballance.

S E C T. XXX. *That there's no Fatality in some Proper Names.*

WHAT I have been observing against those who fancy there are certain appointed Times, makes me think of much such another Illusion as prevails over almost all sorts of People, that there are some Proper Names very ominous. Thus they say *Harry* is ominous to the Kings of *France*, and that special Care ought to be taken not to call any of the King's Children by this name, for fear of exposing 'em to the Destiny of the three last *Harrys*, whose Deaths are perfectly Tragical. I'm told Monsieur has been advis'd not to give the Title of Duke of *Valois* any more, because he has lost some of his Children with this Title already: which shews, say they, it carries a malignant Influence, and ought to be avoided. They even imagine, there are certain Names which influence our Morals; and I have read in (g) *Brantome* upon this Subject, that the Emperor *Severus* comforted himself under the Misfortune of his Royal Consort's ill Conduct, with this, that her Name was *Julia*, and that Women of that Name were Prostitutes

(g) Tome premier des femmes gallantes.

from all Eternity. The same Author adds, that he knew a great many Ladys with certain Names, which he forbears mentioning out of Reverence to the Christian Religion, who were more generally subject to give themselves a loose than Women of other Names, and that he hardly ever knew one that miss'd. I don't quote him in his own Language, because 'tis a little too familiar for me, and has too much of the Man of Quality, who writes as he speaks. But I must freely say, it seems strange how a Man of his sense cou'd come to imagine the Christen-Name shou'd have any hand in that matter.

In all probability Chance order'd it so, that his own Friendships and Intrigues grew up with Cabals, where the greatest part of the Women were of one Name; had he fallen in with any other Set of the Fair, or had any other Name been that of the major part of his Female Acquaintance, the remark had infallibly fitted that Name. This is the best thing I can think of to reconcile *Bran-tome's* Observation to Reason, and save his Credit at the same time: For as to any thing more in't, nothing can be absurder than to imagine, that because he who baptizes an Infant moves his Organs of Speech after a certain manner, which makes the Standers by hear one particular Word more than another, therefore the poor Child shall at 15 or 16 years after be strongly addicted to Acts of Impudicity, which she had not been near so subject to if the Parson had hapned to form another articulate sound at the moment of her Baptism. Yet this is plainly the Absurdity People must always be driven to, who maintain that certain Proper Names carry ill luck with 'em. A Ship-wrack

wrack which sends a Merchant packing, a Conspiracy which takes away Monarch's Life, is owing purely to this, That the Priest had a long time before pronounc'd one word rather than another in the Ceremony of Baptism. Had *Lewis XIII.* been christen'd *Harry*, he had been undoubtedly kill'd at the Siege of some revolted Town, by a random Ball unaccountably leaving its true Line of Motion on purpose to kill King *Harry*; for this Prince was too good a Catholick to die the Death of his Predecessors: however his Christen-Name *Harry* must cost him his Life by some violent means or other. What piteous Stuff is here!

SECT. XXXI. *The excessive Superstition of the Heathens with respect to Proper Names.*

I With People wou'd take this Method in judging of all the Pagan Superstitions with relation to Names. In *Rome*, when they levy'd Men for their Armys, special care was taken that the first Man's Name upon the List were an auspicious Name. The Censors in taking an account of the Number of Citizens, constantly begun with a name of Good-luck, as (a) *Valerius, Salvius*. They who led up the (b) Victim to the Solemn Sacrifices, were indispensably to have one of these Names. When they sat upon adjudicating the Claims to the Publick Farms, they always set up the Fishery of the Lake *Lucrinus* first, and this (*boni ominis ergo*) for good Luck sake. Can any thing in nature be more extravagant than draw-

(a) Festus. (b) Cicero lib. I. de Divinat. Plin. lib.8. cap.2.
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ing a good or bad Augury from the Magistrates pronouncing *Valerius* rather than *Furius*? Good reason had *Apuleius* to laugh at those who took him for a Conjuror, because he sent to Market for a kind of Fish which they judg'd to be a Sovereign Love-charm, from a resemblance between its Name and that of certain secret Parts of the Body: Simpletons, can't you see, (c) says he, if your reasoning holds, Chalk must be a Sovereign Remedy for the Stone, and Craw-fish for a Cancer?

By this one may see the Enormity and prodigious Extravagance of the Pagan Superstition as to Names. They carry'd it to that excess, that as *Festus* (d) tells us, The Roman breeding Women offer'd Sacrifice to the Goddess *Egeria*, from no other Devotion, than that the word *Egeria* in their Language had a near resemblance to the word which signify'd Child-bearing. 'Tis the very same Reason which determines Christians to address their Devotions in certain Cases to one Saint rather than another. For example, there's no doubt that Women with sore Breasts put themselves under the protection of St. *Mammard* rather than any other, because of the name of the Saint. 'Tis for the same reason without all dispute, that those troubled with sore Eyes, as Glass-grinders and Lanthorn-makers, recommend themselves to St. *Clare*; they who are

(c) *Posse dicitis ad res venereas sumpta de mari spuria & fascina propter nominum similitudinem, qui minus possit ex eodem littore calculus ad vesicam, testa ad testamentum, Cancer ad Ulcera? Apul. Apol. I.* (d) *Quod eam putarent facile foetum vivo egerere.*

troubled with Deafness to St. *Ouin* ; People in the Gout to St. *Genou* ; those who have scal'd Heads to St. *Aignan* ; those in Prison and in Irons to St. *Lienard* (e), and so on of a great many more. Altho this Remark is to be met with in the Apology for *Herodotus*, a scandalous Libel (f), and very injurious to the honor of the Catholick Church ; it is true nevertheless, and own'd by Mr. *de la Mothe-Vayer* (g) in his *Hexameron Rustique*, and by Mr. *Menage* (h) in his *Origin of the French Tongue*. These two Gentlemen equally learn'd, and well-affected to Holy Things, don't mean by owning the Act to condemn the Invocation of Saints: for upon the whole, if St. *Clare* be not more able to cure sore Eyes than another, no body will say he is less; so that People may as well address to him as any other. They wou'd only shew by this Sincerity, that the smallest Matter is sufficient to rule the peoples Choice, and that the resemblance of two Names is a powerful Motive. By the way, I make no scruple to tell you in confidence, 'twere the poorest, grossest Superstition to imagine, that because St. *Clare* is call'd St. *Clare*, therefore God has given him the Gift of curing sore Eyes. So that if our People trust in any one Saint more than another because of his Name, they are under a horrible Illusion; for in short, 'tis incontestable, that Proper Names have no manner of Virtue in 'em.

(e) Merc. Francois Tom. 4. ad annum 1616. (f) Cap. 38.
 (g) Sixieme jour. (h) Au mot acariatre.

SECT. XXXII. *In what Sense one proper Name is to be prefer'd before another.*

I Don't however disapprove preferring one Name to another; for as the generality of the World's made, there are several Names might hinder a Man of Quality's taking a Fellow into his Service. We read in the History of *Spain*, that the Embassadors of a Monarch of *France* being come to the Court of *Alphonfus IX.* to demand one of his two Daughters in Marriage for the King their Master, they chose the least handsome call'd *Blanche*, and left the beautiful *Urraca*, because her Name they thought had something shocking. We must not therefore think it strange that the Laws (*i*) dispense with an Heir's taking the Name prescrib'd by the Testator, when 'tis either ridiculous or ungentleel; for the condition is too grievous as the World goes. I own further, there may be Names which in some Conjunctions contribute to the greatest Events, either by exciting in the Persons themselves a noble Emulation, or by working upon the Superstition of others to take 'em for good Augurys: the Fears and Hopes communicated thro an Army on the appearance of any thing they will construe a good Presage, being often the principal Cause of a Victory. I don't therefore think it amiss for People to chuse the best Names, such especially as will best put 'em in mind of their Duty. And I'm wholly of the Humor of *Milantia*,

(i) L. 7. D. ad. S. C. Trebell.

Wife of the famous Canonist (k) *John André*, who being ask'd her Opinion by her Husband in this Point, answer'd, That if Names were not to be had without paying for, the Parents were oblig'd to buy the best, and bestow 'em upon their Children. But I can't indure People shou'd chain a kind of Fatality to certain Names, either with respect to the Party's Morality or his Fortune. As it is false, that Providence affects to display it self more conspicuously in the Month of *September* than *October*, or upon the first of *January* rather than the first of *March*; so is it notoriously false that Vertue or Vice, good or ill Fortune, wait upon proper Names, either by Destiny or natural Consequence. There are *Lucreces* and *Helens* who have Honor and Vertue, and there are others of each Name who have neither. We see fortunate and unfortunate Kings of all sorts of Names; and if the Circumstance of the Name be capable of bringing any thing good or bad to pass, 'tis purely thro our own ill Conduct, or want of Judgment, or thro our peculiar good Address. Yet altho what the weakest of Mankind might object against the Superstition of Names be demonstrative, it's scarce credible how many kinds of Divination have been built upon this wretched Foundation: Which is enough to convince us, that the general Consent of Mankind in relation to Presages, whether of Comets or any thing else, is of no weight.

(k) Quod si nomina in foro venderentur, deberent parentes pulcherrima emere quæ filiis imponderent. *Joh. Andr. in Cap. secundum extra de prabend.*

SECT. XXXIII. *How far this 5th Reason is
conclusive against the Presages of Comets.*

BUT to come to Reflections of more importance: I desire you, Sir, to weigh this 5th Reason; It's certainly a decisive one, if any be. The Question now is not about the possibility of the Comets altering our Elements, or whether they preface in the quality of a Cause, or of a Sign only which returns at a fix'd Period, when Mankind is about to be visited with extraordinary Judgments; but concerning the truth of the Fact, which I deny point-blank, and which was the only Bulrush left you. All my other Reasons don't press you so hard, but you have some loop-hole or other to save you: For we may tell you over and over, we have no reason to believe, that what happens some years after the appearance of Comets is produc'd by any Influence of theirs; you'll still reply, That Comets are ne'er the farther from being evil Augurys, because having never yet appear'd without great Calamitys succeeding, 'tis to be presum'd there is some Connexion or natural Relation between them and the Calamitys. Say, this is not the Connexion of an Effect with its Cause: with all my Heart; it is at least such as is sufficient to give warning, that when one of the two presents, the other is not far off.

And indeed if we suppose the Comets to move in a Circle, whereof there's only a small portion in our view, we may well enough conceive how they return after a certain Term of Years. If we further suppose this Revolution perform'd in
much

much the same space of time as is requisite for the Earth's fermenting certain malignant Exhalations, capable of causing a Pestilence, a Famine, &c. as we know by Experience that the matter of Fevers takes up so many hours to acquire the Qualitys which cause the Fever; and by Physicians, that in some Constitutions this Matter produces Fevers periodically, at the expiration of a certain number of Years: If, I say, we suppose thus, the appearance of a Comet is as certain a presage of great Calamitys, altho they no ways contribute towards 'em, as if they produc'd 'em in the nature of a physical Cause. If it be objected, that this Fermentation, suppos'd to be perfected at the same Periods with the return of the Comet, must at last cease to keep time, because of the continual Alterations within and without the Earth, which must necessarily hinder the Conjunction of all the Causes concurring heretofore; yet this won't do: for I know those, who rather than sink under this difficulty, will have recourse to the Immobility of the Emphyrean Heaven, and ascribe the regularity of the Fermentation in question to a Virtue from above, in imitation of those who make it the Cause why certain Parts of the Earth produce constantly the same things, tho the Aspects of the other Heavens, and consequently their Influences, change incessantly with respect to those Parts. Which by the way puts me in mind of certain University-Men, who will needs have it, that the Virtue ascrib'd to Bodys of painting themselves in the Eye by means of the *intentional Species*, is one Effect of the Influences of the same Heavens. There will therefore always be room for a struggle

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gle as long as you are perswaded Experience is o' your side ; and 'tis distressing you to the last, if I prove Experience does not at all favour you.

I have read in (a) *Cicero*, that the knowledge of Presages is founded much more on the Observation of Events, than on Reason or Speculation ; and that in Matters of this nature we are not to insist on a Cause, as *Carneades* and *Panetius* did, who, together with *Epicurus*, were almost the only Opposers of this pretended Science. When they desir'd to know whether 'twas *Jupiter* who ordain'd the Crow to croke o' the left Side, and the Raven to croke o' the right ; they answer'd, 'Twas unreasonable to start such Questions : That they ought to rest satisfy'd in the Experience of all Ages, which had sufficiently confirm'd the Truth of Divination : That there are Plants whose Virtues we know, without discovering the true Cause of their Effects ; and that People don't therefore think it just to call the Mystery of Physick in question. Whereupon *Cicero* instances in many natural Subjects, whose Propertys are known, tho not the Causes of these Propertys ; and brings his Brother at last to declare, *He's content to know these things do come to pass, altho ignorant of the manner how.* This is exactly your Case, Sir : Let a Philosopher wrack you to tell how the Comets presage our Evils, you can only say, That

(a) *Quarum quidem rerum eventa magis arbitror quam causas quæri oportere*——*Observata sunt hæc tempore immenso, & significatione eventus animadversa & notata*——*hoc sum contentus, quod etiam si quomodo quidque fiat ignorem, quid fiat intelligo.* *Lib. 1. de Divin.*

tho he knows not how the Sun gives Light to the World, yet he as much believes it as the rest of Mankind, because the thing convinces by Impression. Thus the Experience of all Ages informing us, that Comets are ever attended with Calamitys, they ought to be look'd on as the Presages of Evil, tho we are not able to explain how they are so. You lie open enough, I assure you, Sir, to be pounded in this Intrenchment; but as long as you appeal to Experience, you'll always find one Barrier or other. Wherefore I summon you forthwith to the Tribunal of Reason, and dare give my word you shall not carry your Cause there.

SECT. XXXIV. *Some Observations necessary for a right Information of the Fact.*

AS 'tis easy for every one to examine the proper Proofs of this Fact, which are only the Records of antient and modern History, I shan't trouble you with many Citations: I only observe, 'tis neither your Interest nor mine to make this an incident in the Question, That we have no Annals either of the People of the South World, or of the inland Countrys of *Africa* or *America*. For if our side shou'd pretend that the History of these People might furnish Examples of Prosperity's succeeding the Appearance of Comets, your side might, as well alledg, they may afford Examples of Adversity. Let's therefore be content with the Annals of the known World, and judg of the unknown Parts from these. Nor yet ought we to start another Incident, because some Wars turn to more Advantage than
People

People imagine; and which it may be are greater Blessings than Peace, like Bleeding at certain seasons, which corrects an ill habit of Body. Whatever Advantages this Consideration offers, I freely resign: I'm content all *Palingenius's* Arguments in behalf of War pass for nothing, and this be a constant Maxim, That Peace is one of the Blessings of God, and War one of his Plagues; tho sometimes a War may accidentally turn to the Advantage of a People, and Peace on the contrary to their Ruin. I observe likewise, that Historians lie under the Suspicion of Partiality to your side rather than mine, because they are apt to enlarge on the Calamitys rather than the Prosperitys of a Nation. But the Dispute between us not turning on a nicety, we admit 'em as they are. See then, Sir, with your own Eyes what these Witnesses alledg, and suffer not your Judgment to be bias'd by any thing they offer; I don't mean in the quality of Witnesses, but in that of Murmurers and Reflection-mongers.

SECT. XXXV. *The Years which succeeded the Comets of 1665. compar'd with the Years preceding the Comet in 1652.*

THO I design not to enter into a detail of Events, I can't forbear desiring you to look back a little on the State of Affairs in our own memory, during the seven Years which succeeded the two dreadful Comets in 1665. Can you pretend that *Europe* was afflicted in that time, so as to make us cry out against Heaven we were all undone? Do you see any Calamitys here which exceed the ordinary run? Have barbarous Nations,

Goths and *Vandals*, *Alains* and *Normans*, over-run the fairest Provinces, and fill'd the World with Bloodshed and Desolation? Has the Pestilence dispeopled flourishing Kingdoms, or consign'd the greatest part of Mankind to the Grave? Have the People cry'd out for Bread in most Countrys? Have we seen Kings dethron'd by their rebellious Subjects, or the unjust Arms of their Neighbors? Have Heresys and Schisms taken their Rise from these Years? Or has a general Impunity been authoriz'd by the Magistrate? On the contrary, have not the Sword, Pestilence and Famine, the three great Scourges of Mankind, made a League with the Nations of the Earth, and spar'd, as much as we can promise our selves in the present Condition of our Nature?

I can find but four Wars within the Space of time we have pitch'd upon: The War between the *Turk* and *Venetians*; the War between the *Spaniards* and *Portuguese*; that between *England* and *Holland*, and the Campaign of *L' Isle*. The two first, which began long before the Comet appear'd, were brought to a happy Conclusion within the time I mention; the two others were begun and ended almost at the same time: which shews, that the Influence of the two Comets in question was pacifick, and much more a Friend to Union than Discord, seeing they happily put an end to the Wars begun without their Participation, and appeas'd those suddenly which were enter'd into while their Influences reign'd.

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SECT. XXXVI. *The War between the Turk and Venetians.*

YOU must needs, Sir, remember a certain old Acquaintance of ours, who cou'd never break himself of his Witticisms in the old way, tho we had often endeavour'd to raily him out on't: But I question whether you remember what a Surprize he was in when we had the News that the Peace negotiating between the Emperor and the *Turk*, after the Battel of *Raab*, was actually ratify'd. *How!* says he, *strike up a Peace at the very Beard of the Comet, and when there's the fairest Prospect in the World of forcing the Turk to pay the Piper, and make Christendom Restitution. I dare swear the Comet goes back, that it may push with more Violence; she'l meet us in the Isle of Candy; there it is the Storm's to break.* In the mean time, Sir, you'll allow me, that what pass'd in *Candy* from the Year 1665 till the Treaty of Peace, can by no means be accounted among the extraordinary Calamitys which Heaven thinks fit to signify by the Appearance of Prodigys: For if you examine the Transactions there, they amount to no more than the Loss of a Town, block'd up for a long time before. If the loss of *Candy* be a Blow to *Christendom*, 'tis a Blow we must reckon to some other time beside that which is run out since 1665. it being well known the *Turks* had possess'd themselves of the Island many Years before; and by the Blockade of the capital City, made the whole Kingdom as insignificant to *Christendom* as it is at present, and it may be something more, since the *Venetians* are now at liberty

to make the best of what Effects they have in the Island, without being oblig'd to the vast Expence they were at during the War: So that, taking one thing with another, the Peace concluded in 1669. instead of rendring the Affairs of the *Venetians* worse, has really better'd 'em, and consequently the Comet has not aveng'd the Affront it receiv'd at the Peace of *Raab*. Upon the whole, is it at all strange that a Prince, so powerful as the Grand Seignior, pressing the Siege of a Place for two Years together with all the Obstinacy and Fury imaginable, and favor'd by the nearness of his own Dominions, shou'd at last wrest it from a Republick, forc'd to go a begging for Supplis at 600 Leagues distance? I rather think she may bless her Stars for coming off so well.

SECT. XXXVII. *The War between the Spaniards and Portugese.*

THE Treaty of Peace between *Spain* and *Portugal* was an inestimable Blessing to both Crowns: To the first, because far from being able to recover what she pretended to, she had reason to fear more and more Losses under a Minority, not altogether free from Discontents. And for the second, because, beside the peaceable possession of its States, and a stop to the charge and inconveniencys of War, she had the pleasure of seeing her Sovereignty own'd by a Neighbor that had contested it for a great many Years. But you'l say, 'tis a misfortune to *Spain* to lose such a Kingdom as *Portugal*, and confess its Despair of recovering it. It is so; but 'tis a misfortune you must charge to the Year 1640. and

and to the Losses this Crown sustain'd before the two Comets, which are hereby clear'd from the imputation you wou'd bring 'em under. It may be you have heard the good Saying of the Count *de Villa Mediana*, upon an Equestrian Statue of *Philip IV.* with this Inscription, *Philip the Great; Si lo es, es come un ojo, que mas tierra lel levan mas le engrandezen.* 'Twas in reality under the Reign of *Philip IV.* that *Spain* sustain'd its greatest Losses, and consequently there's no reason to charge 'em to the Comets of 1665.

SECT. XXXVIII. *The War between England and Holland.*

AS for the Ruffle between *England* and *Holland*, 'twas hot enough for the short time it lasted; but as two or three Campaigns gave it vent, it was neither fatal, nor very prejudicial to either side. Upon the whole, by the Treaty of *Breda*, the *English* found themselves just where they set out, and the *Dutch* so little mortify'd, that their Fortunes look'd too smiling to make 'em wish they had lain by in the profoundest Peace; inso-much that their Successes inspiring 'em with too high Thoughts of their Strength, made 'em forget they had sufficient Obligations to *Lewis the Great* to let him conquer *Flanders* quietly. Their Presumption had like to have cost 'em dear, but that's no fault of the Comets in 1665. 'twas the natural consequence of the necessity they saw themselves under of putting a stop to the aggrandisement of a Neighbor, who began to be formidable in the eyes of *Europe*. They thought they were oblig'd in Policy to keep a Ballance between

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their Neighbors, and to lay hold of the flourishing Condition of their Republick, to prevent a total Invasion of the *Low Country's*. If they found themselves mistaken in reasoning upon these Principles, or if Fortune did not second the use they propos'd to make of those Successes which attended 'em during the first five or six Years of the Comet, why that's another matter.

If you tell me, Prosperity is sometimes the terriblest Punishment God Almighty can inflict upon Man, I shall tell you in return, Adversity is the greatest Favour he can bestow; so that our whole Dispute will only be a playing upon Words. To fix it therefore to something certain, we must agree that the Question be, not, Whether the Comets bring Blessings, which Sinners do not rightly use; or Evils, capable of turning 'em to God: but, Whether they certainly draw after 'em what we commonly understand by Evil and Adversity.

SECT. XXXIX. *The War between the French and Spaniards.*

AS for the Campaign of *L'Isle*, this you'll readily allow has done abundantly more good than harm: As it was not properly an Invasion, so much as the taking possession of a Fee, which was the Queen's by Inheritance, and which they refus'd to convey to her, altho her Right was clearly made out, and notify'd to all *Europe*, in the learned Pieces the King had caus'd to be publish'd in several Languages: Our Forces enter'd upon the Estates of the *Spaniards* without committing the least Disorder. Neither did the

Goodness

Goodness of this Great Prince stop here : He took care the Country thro which his Troops were to march, might be free even from the Alarms with which the Approach of an Army does usually fill the Peoples Heads. He publish'd beforehand he did not design to break the *Pyrenean* Treaty, nor disturb Tradesmen in the exercise of their Callings, nor Husbandmen in tilling the Land, nor the Reapers in saving the Harvest, nor the Merchants in their Commerce, nor suffer any of those Pranks to be play'd which render the march of Royal Armys incommodious.

The Progress of his Arms was perfectly surprizing ; every thing which had the rashness to oppose him, was soon forc'd to yield to the weight of his Valour and of his Vigilance, and of that sage Activity whereby he readily brings to pass the most difficult things. He was seen to pierce thro the *Netherlands* like a flash of Lightning, make Marches and Countermarches, leaving signal Monuments of his Victories wherever he came : Very far from saying as the Prince in the Parable of the Gospel ; *Inimicos illos meos qui noluerunt me regnare super se, adducite huc & interficite ante me :* " And those mine Enemys who wou'd not that " I should reign over 'em, bring hither and slay " 'em before me. His Majesty gave 'em all a thousand Marks of his Royal Favour, and it may well be reckon'd an extraordinary Providence to the Towns conquer'd this Campaign, that they had not Forces enough to make resistance, since if they had remain'd under the *Spanish* Dominion, they had been far from enjoying that Security and sweet Repose they have slept in during all the late War. His Majesty's immense Power
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screen'd 'em from all Danger and Disquiet, they fear'd neither Siege nor Blockade; whilst all the other Towns around, which had not the Honor to belong to the King, were in continual Frights in the midst of their Marshes, and their Sluices, and Citadels, and prodigious numbers of Troops: Nothing cou'd pacify their Fears. His Majesty had little more to do than put himself in motion at a Season of the Year, which alone was Obstacle enough to all other Conquerors, to strike such a Terror into all these Towns, that the sight of a formal Siege laid to the strongest, was not thought a sufficient Reprieve by any of the rest.

Great then has the Advantage of those Citys been which fell into the King's hands in 1667, in being subdu'd by our invincible Monarch. On the other hand, the uniting so many flourishing Citys to the State, and in so glorious a manner, has been a considerable Advantage to the King, and a much more considerable Advantage to him than Disadvantage to the King who lost 'em; by reason of the Situation rendering 'em of great importance to the Crown of *France*, whereas the same Situation made 'em of little or no use to *Spain*. And thus I think I have reason to conclude, that the Issue of the Campaign of *L'Isle* has done more good than harm.

SECT. XL. *That Spain wou'd do well to part with the Low Countrys.*

I Have heard an able Statesman say, That all the King of *Spain's* Dominions, which lie remote and separated from one another, are rather

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a Burden than Advantage to him; and that if he understood his true Interest, he'd be of King *Antiochus's* mind, who, after the loss of the Battel of *Magnesia*, being requir'd by the *Roman* Senate to deliver up all his Dominions o' this side Mount *Taurus*, declar'd he thought himself oblig'd to 'em for taking a vast Country off his hands, which he was at a continual expence of Blood and Treasure to maintain: I mean, if the Council of *Spain* understood the Interests of that Crown, they wou'd thank us for lessening their continual Expence and Trouble in defending so many Places, and desire to be intirely deliver'd from the Perplexity. During the tedious Wars between *Spain* and *Holland*, one * brings in a *Spaniard* boasting, *That their Master cou'd have extirpated these Rebels long ago, if weighty Reasons of State had not hinder'd him; but that he spar'd this Land of Contradiction to be a kind of Manege, or Fencing-School for his loyal Subjects, where they might always be sure of due Exercise to keep 'em in wind.* I can assure you, Sir, this Reason does not hold, and there are so few *Spaniards* who take the opportunitys of learning the Art of War which *Flanders* affords 'em, that 'tis hardly worth while to keep up the School. They had better say, Their King won't part with the *Low Country*s for fear the *French* Spirit, naturally active and averse to Repose, not finding where to imploy it self, shou'd come to molest the *Spaniards* in the peaceable enjoyment of their Estates at home, and disturb the Lethargy which has seiz'd the Nation: yet even this Consideration shou'd pre-

* Balfac in his *Latin Poems*, p. 42.

vail with the Council of *Spain* to part with *Flanders*, because if the *Spaniards* shou'd be attackt at their own Doors, they might probably rouse the antient Spirit so famous heretofore, and not leave the Management of publick Affairs to the Vigilance of Strangers.

There is no doubt his Catholick Majesty wou'd be a considerable Gainer by parting with what's left him in the *Low-Countrys*: for besides being rid of the trouble of watching over Provinces from whence he has no Remittances, and which has sent no Revenue into *Spain* for 50 Years past, but Expresses which are enough to turn all the Ministers gray; besides this, I say, 'twere much more honorable to throw it up with a good Grace, than see it torn from him by piecemeal, and by a hundred shuffling affronting Methods, sometimes even by Decrees and Actions serv'd upon his Majesty by a common Bailiff. This Cession wou'd likewise be much for the Interest of the *Low-Countrys*, where a Man can't travel without a Guard, for fear of being stript to his Shirt upon the highway; a Grievance which wou'd never be suffer'd under a *French* Government. 'Tis pity so fine a Country shou'd be in the Hands of a Prince unable to defend it from Highway-men. And ought any one to think hard of our great Prince, who has always lov'd the *Flemings*, for expressing a desire of delivering 'em from the *Spanish* Garisons, which instead of protecting the Country rob without controul? As if Travellers shou'd suffer, because the Court of *Spain* has not mony to pay its Troops in *Flanders*.

Besides, how mortifying must it be to the *Spaniard* who always affected to excel and overlook us,
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and who heretofore fill'd all the Courts of *Europe* with Fears and Jealousys, to be now forc'd to teaze 'em one by one with Complaints, with Memorials and humble Petitions, for Protection against the Power of *France*, and not meet with one Prince to pity 'em! Not that any honest Man desires the King shou'd aggrandize himself as he does, unless the Justice of his Pretensions be evident: for tho' our invincible Monarch takes nothing but what's his own, and what he proves his legal Right, in which, as a certain (a) Author remarks, he imitates *Joshua* who order'd the Ark, wherein was the Law of God, to be always carry'd before his Army; yet our Neighbors don't perceive the Force of all our Reasonings. They say one must have his Senses assisted by an Army of a hundred thousand Men, to find in the Treatys of *Munster* and *Nimeguen* any such Sense as we wou'd put upon 'em; that undoubtedly they who drew up the Articles of these Treatys never imagin'd any one cou'd interpret 'em in this sense; and that if they really said what we will have 'em say, they have acted like those who draw up the Decrees of Councils, and who say more than themselves understand, whereby in process of time People find out several Mysterys and Meanings in their Expressions, which they never dreamt of. What hinders then but our Neighbours shou'd hearken to the Crys of the *Spaniards*? The Dread of turning that Thunder upon themselves which threatens elsewhere. But let's return to our Subject.

(a) See a *Traſt* intitl'd, The Queen's Rights.

SECT. XLI. *The Felicitys of the Year 1668.*

THIS Year was more universally happy than the preceding; for by the Treaty of *Aix la Chapelle*, the King of *Spain* recover'd a Province which he cou'd ne'er have regain'd by his Arms, and secur'd the Possession of what was left him in the *Low Country*s, which he had infallibly lost if the War had continu'd. By the same Treaty the Places conquer'd the Campaign before had the good Fortune of falling to a Prince's Lot, who has deliver'd 'em from infinite Inquietudes, as I have already observ'd, and who maintains 'em in a state of Prosperity, which no black Thoughts of the future are able to allay. Thus a general Peace was concluded in the West, and Peace alone is an invaluable Blessing. All the Christian Princes banish'd their Fears and Jealousys; and our King crown'd his Glory by an Action, alone sufficient to render him immortal, tho he had not perform'd all those Prodigys since, which have spread his Fame to the utmost Corners of the Earth; for he generously resign'd a Conquest which no body cou'd wrest from him by force, and deny'd himself all the Advantages Fortune had put into his hand: An Example of Moderation which deserves greater Praises than the Conquest of an Empire!

And now can it be pretended, that the Comets of 1665. were succeeded by a fearful Deluge of Evils? And may'nt we justly laugh at the Astrologers, who declar'd they presag'd dreadful Events in the World, Schisms and monstrous Heresys in the Church? Some of this Tribe it seems advis'd the Emperor to shut himself up for twenty Days

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together, in a Palace built upon the strongest Foundations, in a gloomy Vale, cover'd round with Mountains; as you may see at large in the (b) *Theatrum Cometicum* written by *Stanislaus Lubienietzki*, a Polish Gentleman.

SECT. XLII. *The Pacification between the Jesuits and Jansenists.*

BUT the Year 1665. is not happy in a Cessation of Arms only; 'tis more remarkably so on the account of another Cessation very necessary for the Good of the Church, and very difficult to be accomplish'd, it being to reconcile two great Partys of Divines who had been long together by the Ears; and likely enough to make a scandalous Schism in the Church, if suffer'd to go on in their own way. You must be sensible, Sir, that men of your Profession have the Character of being subject to great Heats in Disputes about the smallest Trifles, and of stirring up Heaven and Earth to get their will of their Adversarys when they fancy 'em in a considerable Error. A Book or two costs nothing on such an occasion; nothing so cruel as commanding 'em to lay down their Arms: 'Tis for this reason the World judges the Pacification of Differences among Divines a very nice and difficult Work. 'Tis not my business to examine the Grounds of this Censure; I shall only observe, that the Difference between the Jesuits and Jansenists was justly thought an Affair of consequence, and extremely hard to be decided. Not but the Subject was next to nothing, the Jansenists

constantly declaring, they were agreed in the point of Right, and pretending to no more than that the Propositions condemn'd by the Pope cou'd not be drawn from the Writings of *Jansenius*, which you see is a Trifle: for as it concerns no body's Salvation to know whether ever there was such a Person as *Jansenius*, so 'tis no way material whether *Jansenius's* Books contain this or that Proposition; and that part at least of the Injunction might well be spar'd, which oblig'd the Religious Women, who understood not a word of *Latin*, to give under their hands, that *Jansenius* had taught such and such Doctrines. Where, alas! was the need of Womens troubling their heads about such matters? However, as this Dispute turn'd, it was no longer an indifferent thing: The Pope's Authority became concern'd in't; the Rights of the Bishops intangl'd; a world of Calumny, publish'd of one side and t'other, had strangely four'd the Partys: They talk'd of nothing less than Briefs from his Holiness, Orders of Council or Parliament, Circular Letters, Episcopal Mandates; they preach'd openly against the Jansenists, they sometimes had recourse to the Secular Arm. In a word, things were come to an Extremity, when his Majesty justly mov'd at these Disorders, and well perceiving by a profound Discernment and exquisite Foresight peculiar to him, that unless both Partys were silenc'd there wou'd be no end of these Divisions, interpos'd his Authority to make 'em acquiesce in the Subscriptions made upon a Medium with which the Court of *Rome* was to be satisfy'd, and oblige his Subjects neither to preach nor publish any thing to revive the Dispute. This Edict of Pacification bears date the 23^d of

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October 1668. and by this single Stroke of true Politicks, the Progress of a Dispute was stop'd, which had shaken *France* for twenty Years, and had like to have torn out the Bowels of the Church. Now as this great Debate had its Rise long before the Comets of 1665. and was happily reconcil'd three Years after their Appearance, 'tis more reasonable to conclude, their Influences were wholesome, seeing they quell'd those Heats which were rise at their coming into the World, than that they were malignant.

It is not, I suppose, Sir, necessary to be particular in recounting all the Advantages *France* has reap'd by this Pacification. This is what you're oblig'd to know, and which in effect you do much better than I: tho it had procur'd us only the Liberty of reading the Works of the Gentlemen of *Port Royal*, I'll maintain we have reap'd great Advantages by it, not only because these Books are extremely well written, great Master-pieces of Eloquence and right Reasoning, but because they explain a thousand fine things, never set in so good a light before. For example, did you ever hear any of your Preceptors state the Extent of our Duty towards those who watch over our Souls? Have you ever heard any other Divines speak intelligibly of the Distinction *de facto* and *de jure*, and between those things we are oblig'd to believe with a Divine, and those we are to believe with a Human Faith? Confess fairly, you were bred up in an utter Ignorance of these things: For they take such Methods in our Church to scare young People with that ugly Spirit inclin'd to reason and reflect, that we think nothing so praiseworthy

as giving our selves up blindfold to the Conduct of our Directors. 'Tis yet certain, as these Gentlemen have shewn, there is a distinction in these Cases; and that 'tis dangerous to give into certain Maxims without limitation: insomuch that we have eternal Obligations to 'em for opening our Eyes to see a great many Truths, which had a suspicious Character wrongfully fix'd upon 'em.

What Thanks are due to these Gentlemen, for introducing into *France* the use of the Scriptures in the Vulgar Tongue, and delivering the Church from the Reproaches of Protestants, and the Shame and Scandal it was continually expos'd to, as if it rob'd the Faithful of those Sacred Treasures? Before these Differences were compos'd, the Version of *Mons* was mightily persecuted, and gave umbrage to the greatest part of the People. But ever since the Peace the King has given to the Church, they have cast off the Yoke, and don't only read these Gentlemens Works without any scruple, which they durst not look on before, so strangely scar'd by the *Molinist* Confessors; but read the Scriptures with much Edification, which they have translated into the *French* Tongue. I say nothing of the many fine Pieces of Morality and Controversy publish'd by 'em since the Edict of *Octob.* 23. 1668. nor of the other Treatises in which they have so happily explain'd the Question about reading the Bible in the Vulgar Tongue, with which our Controvertists were so gravel'd heretofore: for you know, Sir, the value of those Books too well, to doubt the truth of what I have advanc'd, That there have been many publick Blessings soon after the appearance of the two terrible Comets.

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SECT. XLIII. *A view of the Calamitys within the seven Years under consideration.*

LET no body propose the Plague of *London* in 1665. or the Fire the Year after, in ballance to all these Blessings; the Earthquake which swallow'd up the Republick of *Ragusa* in 1667. the Eruptions of Mount *Etna* in 1669, and some other like Accidents: Tragical Events indeed for those who suffer'd by 'em; but neither of general Consequence, nor any way extraordinary. And 'tis easy to shew that such, if not worse Calamitys, have happen'd at indifferent times; as the burning of *Moscow* by the *Tartars* in 1571. the Earthquake which in one night swallow'd up twelve large Citys of *Asia* in the Reign of *Tiberius*; that which destroy'd 20000 Citizens of *Lacedemon*, and bury'd the whole Town in the Ruins of a piece of Mount *Tagetus* 469 Years before Christ; that which happen'd in *Canada* in 1663, and in *Peru* in 1604, which overturn'd all things in less than an hour for the space of 300 Leagues in length, and 70 in breadth; the Eruption of *Vesuvius* in 1631. the Plague which laid the Capitol of the Empire wast, pursu'd the Emperor to *Prague*, and afterwards spread into several Provinces with a terrible Destruction. Besides, are three or four Misfortunes enough to ballance the Blessings of so many Treatys of Peace, and the Prosperity of *France* in particular, which by the King's indefatigable Application to every thing conducive to the Happiness of his People, by his own Views, and by those of his Ministry, the best chosen and the ablest in the World, has seen Manufactures estab-

blish'd, Companys for Trade incorporated, Laws enacted for preventing vexatious Suits; an admirable Regulation in all the Branches of the Revenue; with many other Dispositions, which are a source of endless Blessings, as well publick as private. Don't pretend, Sir, I have not taken in a sufficient compass of Time: for the common Notion is, as I take it, that if Comets presage any Evil at all, 'tis within six or seven Years after their appearance; and 'tis on this Supposition they endeavour to prove their Malignity from History.

SECT. XLIV. *A view of the Misfortunes in Europe from 1645 to 1652.*

NOW, Sir, will you for your Diversion see another Week of Years taken at adventure out of the bulk of Time, and at Seasons when all the ill Air of Comets must be suppos'd perfectly purg'd away? Ponder for a while what has hapned in *Europe* from 1645, to the Comet which appear'd about the latter end of 1652. and take notice I fix precisely on a Time in which the tedious Wars of *Germany* which involv'd so many Princes, and which, right or wrong you'll have it, were presag'd by the Comet of 1618, were finally pacify'd by the Treaty of *Munster*. I presume, that Comet's Malignity has had sufficient Time to purge off, and that it can't with any colour be pretended its Influence reach'd to the Years I have pitch'd on; if 'tis likewise consider'd, that I give 'em in the three last Campaigns of the War between the Allys and the House of *Austria*, which fall within the mention'd Time, and which are remarkable for several bloody In-

counters,

counters, particularly that of *Norlingen*, where Monsieur the Prince of (a) *Condé* so gloriously reveng'd the Affront the *Suedes* had receiv'd in the same Ground ten or twelve Years before; and (b) the sacking of *Praguë*, where Ladys of the first Quality had the hard Fortune to go about the Streets in their Shifts. Without bringing in these Articles, I meet with fearful Calamitys in the Years I have fix'd, and particularly a furious Spirit of Rebellion all the World over.

Here I find the King of (c) *England* formally sentenc'd to death, and beheaded by his Subjects with unusual Circumstances of Horror. I find the King his Son forc'd to hide in the hollow of an Oak, after seeing his Army cut in pieces at the Battel of *Worcester*; and constrain'd to leave his Dominions in the poorest Equipage imaginable, happy enough he cou'd in any Disguise escape the strict search made to bring the Son to the same sad End with the Father. I find *France* tearing out her Bowels in a Civil War, which cost her almost all the Conquests of twelve Campaigns; and suffering the shameful Reproach of Self-murder, at a time when only her own Force cou'd hurt her; the Fate precisely of the (d) *Roman Commonwealth*. I find the Kingdom of *Naples* in Arms against its Prince: I find the *French* at War with the *Spaniard* in *Flanders*, in *Italy*, and *Catalonia*: I see *Portugal* struggling with *Spain*, and with *Holland* at the same time: I see *Kmielniski* General

(a) The 5th of May, 1646. (b) The 26th of July, 1648.
 (c) The 30th of January, 1648. (d) Majus erat Romanum imperium quam ut ullis externis viribus extinguí posset. *Florus* l. 4. c. 2.

of the *Cosaques*, revolted from *Poland*, and entred into a League with the (e) *Tartar*, fill that Country with Bloodshed and Desolation: I see him a second time, taking advantage of the Death of the brave King *Uladislaus*, invite the *Cham* into *Poland*, and making together an Army which never had its fellow since the days of *Attila*, besiege the *Poles* in their Intrenchments, reduce 'em to the last Extremity; and the Peace concluded between 'em the 17th of *August* 1649. upon Conditions dishonorable to *Poland*, which lasted but a short while: I see a fresh Irruption of the *Cosaques* and *Tartars*, and fiercer than the former, occasion a thousand Scenes of Horror, end it's true in their Overthrow, but leave frightful seams of Ravage and Desolation. I see the *Muscovites* in so desperate a fit of Sedition, that the first Ministers of State can't find a Sanctuary in the Emperor's Palace to save 'em from the Rage of the Rabble; The *Czar*, oblig'd to abandon to 'em the Victims they demand, suffer his principal Officers to be thresh'd to death with Cudgels; and after having help'd his Brother-in-Law, and first Favorite, to make his escape, come out himself at last, and humbly beg the Peoples Pardon. This is not all; the *Janisarys* and *Spahis*, the two principal Props of the *Ottoman* Empire, are so imbitter'd against one another, that they are scarce restrain'd from deciding their Quarrel in open Field. The *Sultana Kiossem*, who govern'd the State in the Minority of the young Sultan her Grandson, contrives to have him strangled by the *Janisarys*; but the *Sultana* Mother prevents her by a counter Plot, gets her strangled in his room, and the prin-

(e) *Histoire de Cosaque Sr. Chevalier.*

cipal Officers of the Janisarys pull'd to pieces. I find the *Venetians* at War with the *Turk*, which ends in the merciless pillaging, and utter ruin of the People of *Dalmatia* and the *Archipelago*. I cou'd find a hundred other Confusions, a detail which wou'd tire your patience, and which I don't suppose necessary to make you confess, the seven Years I had cut off from the Tails of the two Comets, are far from vying Tragical Events with the seven other Years which deriv'd from no Comet at all, but which on the contrary precede the Comet in 1652, and begin from the Point of Time at which the expiation of the Comet in 1618 is own'd to be accomplish'd; to wit, from the general Peace concluded at *Munster*.

Confess therefore, Sir, there are Calamitys without Comets, and Comets without Calamitys; and that to reason in the common way, is making the very Negotiations of *Munster* one of the Signs of God's Wrath, since they have been follow'd by so many dreadful Calamitys all *Europe* over.

I know our Friend the Proverb-monger won't fail to say, That *one Swallow makes no Summer*. I pledg my Word on't, that if he turns over his History-books with more care, he'l find other Examples of this kind, and as many as he has occasion for. The (f) *Theatrum Cometicum* cited before, furnishes two very remarkable. A *High-Dutch* Author of the last Century, one || *Elias Major*, helps us to many more, and expressly observes, that the most remarkable Treatys of Peace have been concluded soon after the appearing of a Comet; that several Idolatrous Nations have been

(f) Vol. 1. p. 55. || In lib. de Comet.

converted to the Faith at Seasons which had the same Character upon 'em, and that several famous Universitys have been founded under a Blazing-Star. The Philosopher *Charemon* cou'd inform us considerably in this Point, had the Treatise been preserv'd to our Days, which he wrote o' purpose to prove Comets have generally been the Presages of great Benefits to Mankind. Let our Friend therefore peruse his Historys, and he'l find Examples enough to my purpose. I don't presume to say so much to you, Sir, who have but little spare time on your hands, and who imploy your hours so usefully in reading over the

* *Pag. 67.* Holy Fathers and *St. Thomas*. The * Hint I inconsiderately gave you of this kind I recal, and find my self oblig'd not to reckon so much upon this *Fifth Reason*, how decisive soever, as upon others, because you can't so well perceive the Force on't, without entring into a detail of Facts, and casting up the gross Sums of Good and Evil which have happen'd in the World: which can't be suppos'd to consist with the reading over so many Canons, and so many Councils, and so many Fathers, and so many Schoolmen, and so many Casuists as you have dedicated your Life to. I'l do my best Endeavour to supply this Inconvenience, by a Reason which requires no reading at all; and, as I hinted before, is of a peculiar nature. But e'er I come directly upon't, I shall have a word or two more to say.

SECT. XLV. VI Reason, *That the general Persuasion is of no weight to prove the evil Influences of Comets.*

I Han't yet spent my whole Stock of Philosophical Reasons; I have one more, Sir, none of the least considerable. One may affirm in the sixth place, that there's no prescribing against Truth from universal Tradition, or the general Consent of Nations: because by this Rule we must receive all the Superstitions which the *Roman* People borrow'd from the *Tuscans* in the matter of Augury and Prodigy, and all the Pagan Impertinences in the point of Divination, as incontestable Truths; since all the World was once as much prejudic'd in favour of these, as they are now in behalf of the Presages of Comets. We must own the Devil, who is the Father of Lies according to * CHRIST's Words, has yet deliver'd Oracles full of Truth and Sincerity for the course of a great many Ages; because time was when all the World paid Homage to these Oracles. 'Twere impossible on this Supposition to answer the Argument urg'd in *Cicero* †, *That the Oracle of Delphos had ne'er become so famous in the World, and that the Kings and People of the Earth had ne'er honor'd it with so many rich Presents, if all Ages had not experienc'd the Truth of its Promises.*

* John 8. 44. † Defendo unum hoc, nunquam Oraculum illud Delphis tam celebre & tam clarum fuisset, neque tantis donis refertum omnium populorum atque Regum, nisi omnis ætas oraculorum illorum veritatem esset experta. *Cicer. de Divinat. lib. 1.*

The thing looks plausible, and little did the Author of this Thought imagine, that after an Argument of so much force, it shou'd be necessary to prove, as *Chrysippus* the Philosopher undertook by authentick Depositions, that *Apollo* had deliver'd a world of true Oracles. But 'tis of no force where People deny the Principle upon which this reasoning is grounded, to wit, *That Opinions generally receiv'd are true*; and make appear, that nothing is falser in fact than this Maxim, from the example of *Apollo* himself, to whose Oracle People flock'd from all Parts, tho its ambiguous Answers had been a fatal snare to many Nations, and an abominable Imposture at bottom. Neither is it difficult from other Topicks to shew, we reject this Principle on sober grounds, since we daily discover a thousand Absurditys in other Opinions, the most prevailing and universal; as in those particularly about the Influence of the *Dog-Star*. Not only the reason of the thing shews the falseness of the common Consent about the raging heat of this Constellation; but Experience convinces, did we take the trouble of making the Observation, that *August* oftner happens not to be the hottest Month than it happens to be.

SECT. XLVI. *Instances of prevailing Opinions manifestly false.*

WHAT we commonly say of some sort of Medicines, that one must have a strong Faith before they take place, may justly be apply'd to most Traditions. Have you a mind not to be undeceiv'd? believe then without asking Questions;

Questions; for if you make the least demur, and stand amusing your self in idle Inquirys, you'll surely find Experience does not confirm the common Opinion. To give some Examples:

If the Influences of any of the heavenly Bodys have a secret Virtue with respect to the Earth, those of the Moon undoubtedly have, because she is nearest. Accordingly People are persuaded she has an Influence over a great variety of things: She it is that causes the Increase and Decrease of the Marrow and Brain in Animals, that frets away Stones, that governs the Cold and the Heat, the Rains and the Winds. For if the Weather be set in for Rain at the New Moon, you must not expect fair Weather till the Full. If the Rain does not cease then, you're to reckon it will hold till the next Change; and so of dry and frosty Weather, &c. upon a Principle it belongs to the Conjunctions and Oppositions of the Moon to order the Weather and the Season. Hence it is, that because in common Conversation we frequently fall upon a Discourse of the Rain, or the Cold, or Dry Weather, &c. we hear those who complain of the Weather comfort themselves between whiles with the hopes of the New or Full Moon, which as they imagine will cause a change. You can't deny, Sir, these are Opinions of all Countrys, and common to all sorts of People.

Nevertheless * they who have taken the trouble for 20 or 30 Years together to examine into Marrow-Bones, have observ'd, that whatever Quarter the Moon was in, they met with some

* Mr. Rohault. Phys. Part 2. chap. 27. *Art of Thinking*, chap. 18. Part 3.

Bones which had a great deal of Marrow in 'em, and others that had very little; which shews the Moon has no influence on the Substances of the Brain or Marrow, nor yet on the Substance of the Fish in Oysters and Lobsters: for by making their Observation in this point too, they have discover'd that their Fulness depends not more or less upon the time of the Moon, whatever the popular Opinion would persuade us. I say the same of the change of Weather, and maintain from my own Experience, 'tis not appointed to any Season of the Moon whatsoever, and that there's no certain day in the Lunar Month on which the change, for example, from Wet to Dry, from Open to Frosty Weather, happens oftner than on any other day besides. Did we make exact Observations, we shou'd find the Temperature of the Air has so little Sympathy with the New or Full Moon, that we might count as many Months of Dry as Wet Weather, when the return of the Moon was Wet, and contrariwise: So true it is, that the Changes of the Weather are subject to no rule obvious to us. 'Twere easy to shew, that the reason of the thing is directly against the common Opinion: But I chuse to argue from Experience, and insist, that whoever appeals to this Argument, will find it contradicts the general Opinion of the World. And upon this I must take leave to observe, there's nothing strange in an Error's becoming universal, considering the little care Men take to consult their Reason, when they give in to what they hear others say, and the little use made of the Occasions offer'd of undeceiving 'em. Will you permit me, Sir, to ask you one Question: Have you

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you ever taken notice what multitudes believe, and affirm one after another, That a Man weighs more, fasting than full ; That a Sheepskin Drum bursts asunder at the beat of a Wolfskin Drum ; That young Vipers destroy the old Females when they come to the Birth, and strike the Male dead at the instant of their Conception ; with many other Truths of this kind ? Nor are they content to propagate 'em as Facts well attested, but apply themselves to find out their natural Causes ; they break out into Exclamations of Wonder from the power of Conviction. The Moralists have gone into this Party : The Lawyers recommend themselves from the Bar by these Maxims ; the Pulpit borrows a thousand fine Similys from 'em ; and Schoolboys in their Classes are instructed to fill their Themes with 'em. Nevertheless these are all Matters contrary to certain Experience, as they have discover'd who have had the Curiosity to inform themselves.

SECT. XLVII. *The true Cause of the Authority of an Opinion.*

BY this it appears, the Learned are sometimes as insufficient Security as the common People, and that a Tradition, strengthen'd by their Testimony, is not exempt from the Suspicion of Failure. The Name and Title of Learned must never impose upon us. How are we assur'd that the Reverend Doctor who advances a Tenet, has us'd any greater Ceremony to inform himself, than the Peasant who swallows it by wholesale ? If the Doctor acts thus, his Voice is of no more Authority than another's ; since 'tis evident,

evident, his Testimony carries a force with it, only in proportion to the degree of certainty he has attain'd, by informing himself thorowly of the Fact.

I have told you already, and I tell you again, That an Opinion becomes not probable by the numbers of those who follow it, any further than as it has appear'd true to several of 'em free of all prevention, and from the result of a judicious examination carry'd on with exactness, and supported by a deep insight into things. And as 'tis rightly observ'd, *That one * Eyewitness is better than ten Hearers*: so we're assur'd, that one Man of good sense, who only advances what he has well consider'd, and found to bear the Test of all his Inquiries, gives more weight to his Opinion than a hundred thousand vulgar Souls, who follow like a Flock of Sheep, and pin their Faith on their Leader's Sleeve. 'Tis doubtless on this account *Themistius* and *Cicero* have so frankly declar'd: The first, That he wou'd sooner believe what *Plato* only signify'd with a Nod, than what all the other Philosophers shou'd depose on Oath: And the last, *That Plato's single Authority, without farther proof, broke the utmost Obstinacy of his Spirit* †.

* Pluris est oculus Testis unus quam auriti decem. *Plant.*

† Ut enim rationem *Plato* nullam afferret, vide quid homini tribuam, ipsâ autoritate me frangeret. *Tusc. 1.*

SECT. XLVIII. *That in Philosophy we are not to be decided by a Plurality of Voices.*

I Don't approve this way of theirs, but stand to my point, that we're not to reckon Heads, but to weigh 'em; and that the Method of deciding a Controversy by the Poll is subject to so much unfairness *, that only the impracticableness of other Methods can render it excusable in any case. You see well enough whence this Impracticableness arises; from hence, that no Person on Earth can take upon him to determine, how far one Man's Suffrage excels another's, who has either the Jurisdiction or Light sufficient for reducing the Opinions of the several Members of a Society, each to its just Standard; insomuch that there's a necessity in many cases of allowing one man's Vote to pass as current as another's. But Controversys in Philosophy being of another kind, 'tis lawful to reckon the Suffrages of an infinite number as so many Cyphers, and appeal to the Reasons of the select Few. And so, Sir, without regard to your *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*, an Aphorism which follow'd authorizes the most ridiculous Conceits, I'm of Opinion, we ought first to examine, whether it be in fact true, that the Years which succeeded next after the Appearance of Comets, have been more remarkable for tragical Events, than those which fell out at

* Sed hoc pluribus visum est, numerantur enim sententiæ non ponderantur, nec aliud in publico consilio potest fieri, in quo nihil est tam inæquale quam æqualitas ipsa, nam cum sit impar prudentia par omnium jus est. *Plin. Epist. 12. lib. 2.*

the greatest Intervals of time. If we find the Fact so, we ought to carry our Inquirys farther, and examine what may probably be the Cause of such a connexion between these Events and the Comets. If we find it otherwise, we ought to undeceive the World, and deliver People from their vain Imaginations, and pay no more respect to a Falshood, because embrac'd by all Mankind, than if 'twere a Delirium of two or three Persons only: For as *Cicero* * observes, there's no reason for valuing an Opinion upon the Consent of a Multitude, where each Person apart is so little capable of knowing the Truth, that his judgment is of no weight at all.

SECT. XLIX. *How ridiculous it is to search for the Cause of that which is not.*

THIS method is certainly more natural and better contriv'd, than that by which one begins to inquire, *What the nature of such a thing is*, before he has clear'd the Question, *Whether the thing really exists*. There are so many Realits whose knowledg deserves our Application, that one can hardly blame those too much who imploy their time in finding the Reasons of what *is not*, and who take a pleasure in making a diversion of the Forces of the Mind, to the great prejudice of Truth: Like the Philosopher †, who was vex'd at being told, that the Wool which stuck to some

* An quicquam stultius quam quos singulos sicut operarios barbarosque contemnas, eos aliquid putare universos? *Tusc. Qu. 5.*

† See Montagne's *Essays*, Book 2. chap. 12. where this is charg'd upon Democritus, with some small Alteration.

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Figs brought to Table, came from Sheep which us'd to catch at a Bush planted at the Foot of a Fig-Tree; because it lost him the Subject of a fine Speculation, and the Glory of finding out the reason by mere dint of Thought of a Fig-tree's bearing Wool. I wish for the love of *Plutarch* he wou'd answer this Question, Why Colts chas'd by a Wolf prove better Coursers than others; which the * Author of *The Art of Thinking* makes himself resolve wittily enough, "Because" perhaps the thing's not true. But having read the Original over and over of the 8th chap. of the 2d Book of his *Symposiacks*, where the Question is treated, I cou'd ne'er meet with this Answer to it. In *Seneca* † I have met with something like it, on a Subject curious enough, to wit, the Superstition of the Inhabitants of *Cleone*, a City of *Peloponnesus*, who appointed Persons to give notice to the publick when 'twas about to hail, that every one might immediately offer Sacrifice, or give himself a gash in the Hand to turn away the Hail from his Farm. People reason'd variously upon the thing, and several rack'd their Brain to find out a Cause, why a Cut in the Hand shou'd disperse the Clouds, or turn 'em from the Grounds of *Cleone*; How much shorter wou'd it be, says *Seneca*, to pronounce it a Cheat and a Fable?

Montagne, of whom *Messieurs de Port Royal*, who are none of his best Friends, are pleas'd to observe, || That having never understood the Dig-

* Part 3. ch. 18. † Quanto expeditius erat dicere mendacium & fabula est. *Lib. 4. natural. quest. cap. 7.* || *Art of Thinking*, part 3. chap. 19.

nity of Human Nature, he was well enough acquainted with its Defects, is of *Seneca's* mind in this point *. Hear him in his old *French*, which sometimes has a better Grace than the quaintest Periods of our Purists: *I was just now ruminating as I often do upon this, what a free and roving thing Human Mind is. I ordinarily see, that Men in things propos'd to 'em, more willingly study to find out the Reason than the Truth; they slip over Presuppositions, but are curious in examining Consequences. They leave the Things, and fly to the Causes. Pleasant Praters! They commonly begin thus, How is such a thing done? whereas they shou'd say, Is such a thing done?*

Too many do, as *Montagne* says, quit the Things, and run to the Causes. This was the Character of *Avicenna*, a great Physician in Speculation, but nothing in Practice: Provided a thing did not appear to imply a Contradiction, it serv'd well enough for the Object of his Study, altho perhaps it had never been in Nature. Most of the Physicians in *Galen's* days were troubl'd with the same Distemper; they reason'd at random, and disputed about things which never were. For example, they took a deal of pains to find a Reason, why no callous Substance did grow in the Fractures of the Skull: † “ You have very little
“ to do, says *Galen*, and you're very silly besides,
“ to desire the Reason of a thing which is not;
“ for it's false that these Fractures don't knit again,
“ gain, or that they don't contract a Callosity.

* *Essays B. 3. ch. 11.* † Παρούται μὲν γὰρ ὃ βέλυσται, καὶ υμεῖς αὐτὼς ἐπεὶ ληρώδεις ὥστε τῷ οὐκ ὄντων λέγειν αἰτίας. *Galen. l. 6. μεθοδ. δευτ.*

SECT. L. *The Superstition of the Antients
as to Eclipses.*

I Thought I had said all, but find I have forgot one material Article; don't take it ill therefore if I can't quit you so soon. It is, that People to this day have a frightful Opinion of Eclipses, as if they presag'd the severest Afflictions. The old Pagans had strange Notions on this Head. You shall see several Examples as we go along: But here, Sir, are a few cull'd out for my present purpose.

Nicias, * General of the *Athenian* Army, upon an Expedition into *Sicily*, found himself oblig'd after many Losses, to think of returning into *Greece*: All things being prudently dispos'd for weighing Anchor without the Enemy's notice, Eclipse of the Moon intervenes. *Nicias*, instead of taking so favorable an Opportunity for getting off unknown to the Enemy, was struck with such a superstitious Fear, that 'twas not in his power to stir. On the contrary he was of opinion, they ought to see an intire Revolution of the Moon before they attempted to set sail: Which was much more than the Diviners requir'd, who thought it in most cases sufficient to wait three days after an Eclipse, without undertaking any Enterprize. But *Nicias*, who probably imagin'd, the Influences of the Moon might take their ply, either for a whole Month, or for a Fort-night at least, as almost all the World at this day do, by supposing the Weather which comes

* *Plutar. in his Life.*

in with the New or Full Moon governs that Moon: *Nicias*, I say, did not believe three days sufficient to avoid the Fatality of the Eclipse. He had reason enough to repent his Folly, his Retreat was cut off, he was taken Prisoner himself, and his whole Army destroy'd.

All the fine Harangues * *Agathocles* cou'd make to his Troops, when landed in *Africa*, cou'd not recover 'em from the Terror they were seiz'd with at the sight of an Eclipse of the Sun in their Passage. *Agathocles* by good luck was less superstitious than *Nicias*, and consequently master of more presence of Mind. He set up for Interpreter of the Prodigy, and fairly agreed with his Troops, if the Eclipse had happen'd before their Embarkment, the Presage had been inauspicious o'their side; but happening in their Voyage, its Malignity was turn'd against those they were come to invade. He added, that Eclipses always presage a Change of the present state of Affairs: so that for their parts they had reason to expect, their own Affairs, which they had left in a bad Condition in *Sicily*, wou'd mend; and those of *Carthage*, which were very flourishing, decline. By this means he allay'd their Fears. A hundred other Examples more express might be produc'd to shew, that Eclipses had of old been reckon'd fatal Presages.

* Justin. Hist. lib. 22.

SECT. LI. *The Superstition of the Moderns
in relation to Eclipses.*

THIS is still the Opinion of the Multitude. The Historians seldom take notice of Eclipses, but mention their prognosticating the Death of such a King, the Revolt of such a Province, or some Disaster of this kind they met in their way. From the Astrologers who deal in Almanacks to those who meddle only in Horoscopes of Quality, there's not one but tells you, that Eclipses presage War, Pestilence, Famine, Inundations, Deaths of great Men, and so forth; and they meet with more credit in this particular, than when they foretel the Season only, whether wet or windy, hot or cold, &c. The Eclipse of the Sun, which happen'd the 12th of *August* 1654. was in their account to turn the World upside down: some reckon'd upon a Deluge of Water at least, like that of *Noah*; and some upon a Deluge of Fire, which was to put an end to this World; others contented themselves with the Thoughts of strange Revolutions in States, or the final Destruction of *Rome*. The People were so terrify'd, that they who only shut themselves up in Cellars, or close Rooms, well air'd and well scented by the Physician's directions, to provide against the damps of the Eclipse, thought they had a right to laugh at timorous Minds, and be reckon'd men of bold Thought. In good earnest their Conduct shew'd a great Force of Mind, in comparison of those who fear'd no less than the end of the World. The Consternation was so great, that a Country Curate not being able to confess all his Parishio-

ners round, who were preparing for the last Hour, was oblig'd to tell 'em in his * *Prone*, that they need not be in such hurry to confess, the Eclipse was put off for a fortnight longer. You may meet with the Passage in a Book of Mr. *Petit*, † Intendant of the Fortifications, a man of Sense, perfectly free from Superstition, and who oppos'd popular Error with a great deal of Courage.

You see the Antients and Moderns, the Christians and the Pagans, perfectly agreed about Eclipses prefaging great Calamitys. And yet 'tis a notorious Error, 1. Because Eclipses can do no harm; 2. Because they can be no Signs of harm.

SECT. LII. *That Eclipses can't be the Causes of Harm.*

I Say then, that an Eclipse, whether of the Moon or Sun, can have no evil effect, because the worst it can do, is to hinder the Earth's being illuminated for a little while, and this can't be of any consequence. You know what the Opinion of *Pericles* was in this point, one of the greatest Men of Antiquity; he was just ready to set sail with the Fleet under his Command on some great Expedition, when there hapned an Eclipse of the Sun, which so confounded his Pilot, he neither knew where he was, nor what he was doing: *Pericles*, freed from these Superstitions by the Philosopher *Anaxagoras*, held up his Cloke

* *The Homily or Discourse which the Priest makes every Sunday for the Instruction of his Parishioners.* † *Dissertat. sur le Comets*, p. 113.

before the Pilot's Eyes, and ask'd him if he thought there was any ill luck in that ; no, says the Pilot: Then says *Pericles*, there's no ill luck in the Sun's being eclips'd ; for all the difference between my Cloke which shades the Light from your Eyes, and the Body which causes the Eclipse, is, that one is somewhat bigger than t'other. This Reflexion is so obvious, 'tis strange so few shou'd fall into it.

There's no Man can't easily comprehend, that one may be whole days together in places much darker than the darkest Eclipse, without prejudice to his Health ; and keep a Pare or an Apple-tree in the thickest Shade for three or four hours, without hurting the Fruit or Leaves for that Year. There's no Farmer who wou'd not lengthen the Nights some hours, if he cou'd with a Wish, that the Heat of the Sun might not come on so soon to scorch the Fruits of the Earth. People are agreed, those very thick Clouds which darken the Air, sometimes 5 or 6 days together, more than an Eclipse of the Sun of 5 or 6 digits, when it happens without any Cloud at all, are often favorable to the Harvest. And I'm apt to think, shou'd the New Moon amuse her self for a whole Day and Night with the Sun, so as not to give Light to the Earth for that time, her Absence cou'd cause no harm. 'Tis not to be doubted, one may bear the want of Meat and Drink for a day, without indangering his Life or Health, or feeling the least Inconvenience two days after. And yet 'tis certain Nourishment is much more necessary for the Support of Life than the Light of the Sun, since there are Nations which pass many Months comfortably e-

nough without the Sun's rising above their Horizon. And yet amidst all these Discoverys of our Reason, we cannot or will not comprehend how the Moon or the Shadow of the Earth shou'd intercept the Sun-beams for a very small time, but infinite Disasters must ensue. Nay, they fancy the Malignity of this Darknes goes further, that it marks out the King in the midst of his Court, and distinguishing him from common Men, strikes him alone with a mortal Distemper; which is certainly very extraordinary. Is any thing more senseless than to see People, who retrench with all their Skill behind double Curtains, and Umbrella's, and Window-shutters; who dare not stir abroad but by Night, except in Mask and Parasol, tremble at the thoughts of an Eclipse, which, to express my self nicely for once, is at some Seasons of the Year no more than a kind Office the Moon does the Earth, in serving her for an Umbrella.

SECT. LIII. *Eclipses can't be the Signs or Omens of Evil.*

LET'S now see, whether Eclipses ben't at least the Signs of those Evils which happen in the Earth. I say, Not, Sir: And here I expect the greatest shock, for here's the last resource of those who assert the Malignity of Eclipses and Comets. But to beat 'em out of it, I insist on two points only: 1. That Eclipses are the Effect of such a constant Law of Nature, that there's no little Astrologer who can't foretel the Day, the Hour, and the Point of the Heavens in which they happen, many Ages before they do.

2. That

2. That they happen in all Seasons and in all Countries; sometimes more than four in a Year; sometimes at hours when nobody takes notice of 'em but those whose Trade it is; and often when the Clouds hinder People's perceiving 'em.

The first of these Reasons seems convincing in my Judgment; for in a word, if Eclipses are a natural and necessary Consequence of the Motions of the Stars, they happen independently of Man, and without any regard to his Merits or Demerits, and consequently wou'd happen as they do, whether God resolv'd to punish Sinners or no; insomuch that they can't be constru'd the forerunning Signs of Divine Justice. Besides, we must forfeit all claim to common Sense, or allow that a natural Effect can't be said to be the Sign of any thing, unless when it produces such a thing, or is it self produc'd by it, or where both depend on the same Cause. We shall examine the other ways of one thing's becoming the Sign of another, in a proper place. At present I only take notice, Eclipses don't denote Evils to come, in any of the three ways here mention'd, because I have shewn they're not the Causes of 'em. 'Twere abusing the Patience of a learned Man, to explain these matters at large. But as I call to mind a passage in *Plutarch*, importing, That the Philosophers are in the wrong, to think that by discovering the natural Cause of a thing they deprive it of its significative Character, I shall touch upon this matter a little in this place.

SECT. LIV. *In what sense a natural Effect
may be the Sign of a Thing.*

I Say then, provided the Philosophers take care not to exclude the other Events which depend on the same Cause, they have Reason of their side. For example, if having discover'd the true Cause of the Flight of certain Birds, which we say are Presages of rainy Weather, they find this Cause the very same which produc'd the Rain, or has a necessary Connexion with this Cause, in this case 'twou'd be wrong to deny, that the Flight of these Birds is a proper Sign or Presage of Rain; otherwise they're in the right to deny it, for 'tis on this foot we reject the Superstitions of the antient Pagans, who imagin'd the Flight of a Bird presag'd the loss or gain of a Battel. *Plutarch* adds, that the Art of Man produces Effects which signify certain things, as we see by a Sun-dial: From whence we may infer, that tho the Cause of a thing be known, we ought not to deny 'twas made to be the proper Sign of another thing. The Answer's plain: Men may agree on what Sign they please, and make use of the natural Property of a Body for this purpose, whose Cause is known, where the things signify'd depend upon the human Will: For example, they may make use of the Shadow on the Sun-dial to signify when they're to go to Church. But 'tis quite otherwise with respect to Events not in their power, as Famine, Pestilence, Victory, &c. God alone can give us Presages of such things, either by discovering the Causes upon which these Events necessarily depend, or by informing us that such

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a thing is expos'd to our view, to give warning of such a Calamity. If Eclipses therefore be Presages of Evils to come, it follows God must have appointed 'em for Signs, either by discovering that these Evils depended on Eclipses as their natural Causes, or declaring he wou'd have us appriz'd of our Disasters by the means of these Eclipses. He has done neither, and consequently Eclipses are no Signs. 'Tis manifest he has not imprinted it on our Minds, that Eclipses are the Physical Cause of the Events which follow 'em; for never did it enter into any Man, that an hour or two's dusky Sky cou'd have any positive effect, or be capable of troubling the whole Earth. And 'tis as manifest, God has no where acquainted Mankind, he wou'd have 'em look on Eclipses as certain Presages; not only because 'tis no where reveal'd in his Word, but because Eclipses have nothing in their nature reasonably inducing us to take 'em for Signs of Evils to come: and this is my second reason.

SECT. LV. *Rules for knowing when any thing is a Sign given by God.*

UPON the whole, is it likely God shou'd chuse a thing for the Sign of his Chastisements, which happens regularly four or five times a Year, and which for the most part is observ'd by no body? That such Signs might make Impression on reasonable Creatures, they ought to be rare and uncommon, and they ought to be destin'd, not to presage the ordinary Accidents which traverse human Life in every Year and every stage of it, but to denounce those peculiar Plagues with
which

which God visits the World in the greatest Fury of his Wrath. They ought also not to appear in a pure and simple dependance on the natural course of second Causes, nor be produc'd within a Cloud, nor at the dead of Night when most People are asleep. Why can't we perceive, that a thing which happens certainly every Year, may be as well the Sign of good luck as of ill? Shou'd any Historian take the trouble, might not he find Eclipses conveniently posted to presage the Marriage of his Prince, the Bonfires and Illuminations in all his Dominions for the birth of his Children, the Victories gain'd over his Enemys, the Renewal of Alliances, Treatys of Peace, the stopping of a Pestilence, the Recovery of some of the Royal Family, and whatever else is reckon'd among publick Blessings? I took notice * already, that *Ori-gen* mentions a Philosopher, who wrote a Treatise to prove Comets for the most part betoken'd great Blessings; how much easier were it to prove the same of Eclipses? And as they say, a certain Author † well skill'd in Astrology, having taken the Horoscope of all the great Men of Antiquity, made appear, according to the Rules of this Art, they must be quite different from what they are in History; so 'twere easy to shew Eclipses have been attended with Events altogether different from those which ought to follow 'em according to Astrological Judgments. If you'd set up for a Diviner, says *Martianus* of old, guess the direct contrary of what the Astrologers tell you.

* At Sect. 45. † See Mr. Comier's *Treatise of the new Science of Comets.*

SECT. LVI. *What has been said of Eclipses apply'd to Comets.*

IF you observe, Sir, I offer nothing here against Eclipses, which is not equally level'd against Comets, and this is the reason I have dwelt upon 'em so long. Wou'd you now confine your self to the maintaining that Comets don't cause the Evils which follow 'em, but only forebode 'em? I desire no better, and promise to cut you out Work enough. In the mean time give me leave to remark, as I have done already concerning Eclipses, That Comets are attended with certain Circumstances which unqualify 'em for the Ends of Presages.

They are very frequent; they reckon seven from the Year 1298 to 1314; no less than six and twenty from 1500 to 1543, * fifteen or sixteen between 1556 and 1597. There was seen one constantly every Year for several Years together. 'Tis not unusual to see two in the same Year, either in different Months, or at different Hours of the same Night. There have been four seen at a time in 1529; eight or nine in one Year, 1618. We who are no Astronomers, fancy there have appear'd none from 1665 to 1680: Yet the Astronomers observ'd Comets in the Years 1668, 1672, 1676, and 1677. Some in two days after their appearance plunge into the Rays of the Sun, and are seen no more. Nay, 'tis probable some finish their Course unseen, by keeping close all the

* See Mr. Comier's *Treatise of the new Science of Comets.*

while to this Star. Of this sort was the Comet *Seneca* † mentions, seen by the strangest chance during an Eclipse of the Sun, and which had never been seen but for that Conjunction.

Confess now, good Sir, these are Circumstances no ways belonging to a Sign suppos'd to be expressly ordain'd by God to warn us of our Dangers. Ought such Signs to be so frequent? Don't they lose much of their Force, when we're once us'd to 'em? And if Men won't forbear fancying they are Signs, tho they have had 26 in the space of 43 Years, is it not because they won't make the least use of their Reason?

Why so many Comets in one Year? Is not one Sign of a kind enough at one time? But above all, why Comets only seen by Astronomers? Is not this a Sign thrown away, and which frustrates the End propos'd by Providence in it? How can we imagine God shou'd give us invisible Signs; or if he discover'd 'em to two or three Persons to be communicated to the rest, that he shou'd chuse out Astronomers of all men for this purpose, who have no Religion themselves, and are never likely to preach Repentance to the World? Why permit that Signs, which can't answer the Ends for which they are design'd, except by being expos'd to publick view, shou'd plunge headlong into a quarter of the Heavens, where the Sun renders 'em invisible? Think of this, Sir, and be convinc'd that the Providence of

† Multos Cometas non videmus quod obscurantur radiis Solis, quo deficiente, quendam Cometam apparuisse quem Sol vicinus obtexerat, Possidonius tradit. *Lib. 7. natural. quest. cap. 20.*

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God, infinitely Wise, never does things so little to the purpose.

Don't tell me 'tis none of our business to pry into the Works of God ; I tell you this is mere Evasion, as I shall hereafter demonstrate. Confess rather, that to get clear of all the Difficultys I have started, we must believe that Comets are the ordinary Works of Nature, which without regard to the Happiness or Misery of Mankind, are transported from one part of the Heavens to another, by virtue of the general Laws of Motion, and which more or less approach the Sun, and appear at one time more than another, as their meeting with other Bodys to which God lends his Concourse, requires they shou'd. And as you can't pretend that Comets which have appear'd to two or three only, are properly Signs, you must confess there are some which signify nothing ; whence it follows that none of 'em are Presages, because all the difference between a Comet which is not seen, and one seen by all the World, is, that one is at a greater distance from us, or a smaller Star perhaps, or nearer the Sun than another, which makes no real difference in Nature. I'l write to you by the first opportunity what lies more within the verge of your own Studys.

25 May 1681.

SECT. LVII. VII Argument drawn from Religion: *If Comets were the Presages of Calamitys, God must have wrought Miracles for the Confirmation of Idolatry.*

ALL these Arguments, Sir, I might insist on, with many more, and strengthen 'em against what Objections can be made; but I wave 'em, because I have to deal with a Man not to be won by any other Reasons than such as are drawn from Religion: Here then is one of this kind, which I don't remember in any Author, and which came lately into my Head upon calling over some former Reflections of my own on occasion of the Comet in 1665.

A Clergyman of my acquaintance, who had several times endeavour'd, but always in vain, to persuade me this *Phenomenon* was a very ill Presage, no sooner heard the news of the Death of Philip IV. of Spain, than he makes me a visit o' purpose to confound me with this Disaster; and began the Conversation by asking me, with an insulting Air, *Whether I was still opiniatre enough to maintain, under such irresistible Evidence, that Comets did no Mischief in the World.*

There's reason to believe, the Gentleman had not been immoderately afflicted, if to corroborate his proof he cou'd have told me, as Mr. Bassompierre wrote to Mr. de Luines in 1621, soon after the Death of Philip III. of Spain: || *I begin to think the Comet we made a jest of at St. Germain's, was far from being in. a jesting humor it self, since it has*

|| Bassompierre Ambassad. d' Espagne.

knock'd down a Pope, a Grand Duke, and a King of Spain, all in two months time. For as 'tis said of some sort of Wits, they'l rather lose their Friend than their Jest; so those who espouse Presages, wou'd rather see the Death of two or three crown'd Heads, than their own Predictions come to nothing: like Physicians, who look with an evil Eye on those Patients they had once given over.

I answer'd my Friend, suting my self to his Character, That undoubtedly Almighty God, who does nothing in vain, had never hung out this Comet either to hasten the Death of the King of Spain, or to presage it; That a Prince worn out with Distempers, who had been long kept alive by mere dint of Physick, and by disputing it inch by inch in a crazy Constitution, might well go off of himself, without the trouble of making a Blaze in the Heavens, bigger a hundred times than the Globe of the Earth, and fraught like Pandora's Box with all the Seeds of Death, o' purpose to deprive him of his Life; and that there was so little need of God's signifying to the World his purpose of calling away the King of Spain, that all Europe was rather amaz'd he had struggled with his Distempers so long. He had nothing more to say. Improving t'other day upon this Thought, it came into my mind, that they who maintain the Presages of Comets, are chargeable with making Almighty God do things, not only needless in their Design, but inconsistent with his Holiness. You shall see how I endeavour to prove this.

SECT. LVIII. *That Comets can't presage Evils otherwise than as Signs.*

TIS of Faith, that the liberty of Man's Will is subject to no Influences of the Stars, and that no Physical Power whatever necessarily determines it to Evil: From hence I infer Comets are not properly the Causes of those Wars kindled in the World, because our resolving on a War, as well as the Hostilities exercis'd in the course of it, are the pure Effects of Man's Free-will: They're at most then only Signs or Signals of those Evils ready to be pour'd on the Earth, which God hangs out that Men might take warning, and prevent the dreadful Storm by a speedy Repentance. For I suppose no body hereafter will pretend the Atoms of a Comet have a Power of breeding a Pestilence or a Famine, or any other Effect proceeding from an alteration in the Elements. My I. Reason puts this past all dispute; let it therefore be laid down, That Comets are only the Signs of Evils to come.

SECT. LIX. *That Comets can't be the Signs of Evils to come, without being miraculously produc'd.*

FROM hence it must follow, they are Bodies form'd by the extraordinary Power of God, independent of the great Chain of Second Causes. For if they were produc'd to our view by any Power or natural Revolution of Second Causes, they cou'd designate such future Events only as we perceiv'd had a necessary connexion with them.

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themselves; and therefore cou'd neither presage a War, nor a Pestilence, nor a Famine, because 'tis of Faith that all the free Actions of Man, such as Wars, have no necessary connexion with the Qualitys of any Body; and Reason discovers neither in a Pestilence or Famine, any necessary dependance on Comets. 'Tis God himself then who forms Comets miraculously, to give Mortals warning of the Evils which betide 'em unless they repent; and who gives 'em an Elevation and Motion rendering 'em visible to all the corners of the Earth, that no Sinner might pretend ignorance.

SECT. LX. *A strange Consequence which must follow from Comets being miraculously produc'd.*

NOW, Sir, observe the horrible Consequence of this Supposition; 'tis this, That God has wrought a great number of signal Miracles to inflame the dying Zeal of Idolaters, and prompt 'em to offer Sacrifices, and Vows, and Prayers to their false Divinitys with greater Devotion than ordinary: For as before the establishing of Christianity, God was known only to a small corner of the Earth, and had left all other Nations in the error of their ways, the World knew not what it was to appease the true God whenever he appear'd incens'd. All they cou'd think of doing in this consternation was, to prostrate before their Idols, lead Victims to their Altars, consult the Demons, and do by their directions whatever was most disagreeable to Almighty God: Insomuch that lighting up Comets in the Heavens was, properly

perly speaking, only urging on the Work of Idolatry; and, humanly speaking, this was all God cou'd expect from it.

I don't deny there have been Men of good sense among the Pagans, who knew, the right way of pleasing the Divinity was not by offering whole Hecatombs to his Honor, but by living righteously; and that this was the true Sacrifice to appease incens'd Heaven.

*Immunis aram si tetigit manus,
Non sumptuosa blandior Hostia,
Mollibit aversos Penates
Farre pio & saliente mica.*

Horat.

However, this was not the means they had recourse to when they wou'd disarm the Wrath of God: They never bethought 'em of abating their natural Pride, or Hatred to Enemys; of forgiving Injuriys, mortifying their Lusts, or breaking with their Mistresses; of humbling themselves before God by a lively sorrow for their want of Vertue; of promising a change of Heart, and a general reformation of their Thoughts, Words and Actions. These were things too grievous, and not to be bought and sold; they wou'd rather be at the expence to build Chappels, or store the Temples of the Gods with Gifts and Oblations; and contribute to the Charge of all the Expiations which the Sybilline Books, or Oracles, or Augury, or Priests at large ordain'd. And for this Reason the Demons (who by the unsearchable Judgments of that God whom we ought to adore, were permitted to play upon the Credulity of Mankind) produc'd as often as they were able, extraordinary Phenomena,

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mena, well knowing this wou'd infallibly promote Idolatry, and keep the Sacrifices, and Feasts, and Pagan Superstitions in Life and Vigor.

SECT. LXI. *The Demons preserv'd Superstition by working of Prodigys.*

IF *Brennus* at the Head of the *Gauls* had pillag'd the Temple of *Delphos*, the Zeal of all the Nations flocking to consult the Demon which deliver'd Oracles there, and making him magnificent Presents, had been in danger of being mightily abated; therefore the Devil bestir'd himself to prevent this Blow. He declar'd by the Mouth of his Priestess, he wou'd never betray his Post; * *and that he wou'd undertake to make it good with a parcel of white Rods*, meaning the prodigious Snows he intended to shour down on the *Gauls*. Nothing can be more frightful than the Descriptions left us of the Prodigys wrought on this Occasion. The Earth shook, and open'd in a thousand Places to swallow up the Besiegers; the Thunder broke with a Crash so terrible, that all thought the great Machine of this World was flown in shatters; Lightning flash'd from all Quarters of the Heavens; Rocks of a prodigious Bigness roll'd down from Mount *Parnassus*, and in their fall ground Numbers of the *Gauls* to Atoms. † *Brennus* flew himself in despair; all who sav'd themselves from the Siege perish'd soon after by Hunger, by Cold, or some other distress. In a word, the Demon of *Delphos* cou'd not interpose more visibly to support his Honor, nor con-

* Cicero Lib. I. de Divinar. † Justin. Hist. l. 24.

found the Temerity of *Brennus* with an air bespeaking more of the Divinity. Something like this had happen'd once before, when *Xerxes* sent Troops to pillage the same Temple. And why all this? Not that Men might become wiser or better; that they shou'd conceive a Horror of Sin, and a Love for Holiness: the Devil had rather see all the Temples in the World rifled, than do the least thing to forward such a Change. What then was the meaning on't? why, he wanted more Sacrifice, and wou'd nourish Superstition and Idolatry in the Minds of Men: Not solicitous to have Men repent of their real Sins, but on the contrary endeavoring to obstruct 'em with all his Skill, he design'd the World shou'd look upon the Violation of the Ceremonys of the Pagan Religion, and things consecrated to the false Gods, with the greatest Horror and Astonishment.

What Tricks has he not play'd to have Children sacrific'd to him? * *Dionysius Halicarnassens* gives an account, that *Jupiter* and *Apollo* did once visit the *Pelasgians* with a most fearful Desolation. The Fruits of the Earth, their Wheat and their Barly, were rotten before they were ripe; their Wells dry'd up, or stank so that they cou'd not drink of 'em: Nothing so frequent as Abortions, or Women who dy'd in labour, they and the Fruit of their Body; or if they chanc'd to be deliver'd of a live Child, 'twas either blind, or lame, or crooked. The People and the Beasts of the Field dy'd up and down of various unknown Distempers. Wou'd you know the reason? 'twas, Sir, because the *Pelasgians* having in a time of

* Lib. 1.

Barfenness vow'd the Tenth of their Fruits to these Gods, forgot to sacrifice the Tenth of their Children in consequence of their Vow. There was no Collusion in the Case neither, for the People never had an Intention to vow the Tenth of this kind of Fruit. But as they had to deal with Sparks somewhat sharper than they, a Cavil was started on the letter of the Promise; they were made to understand, that he who says all excepts nothing, and consequently that the Tenth of their Children was due in Sacrifice, which they were e'en forc'd to submit to for Peace sake.

Antient History is full of Instances of this kind, * which shew as clear as Noon-day, that the most effectual means the Demons us'd to stir up the sacrilegious Worship of Idols, and push the superstitious Ceremonys of the Gentiles to the practice of the horriblest Crimes, was by frightening the World with Prodigys, and accustoming Mankind to judg they were so many Denunciations of Evils to come, and Imputations of Negligence in the Service of the Gods; that they must therefore multiply religious Ceremonys, ordain Processions and solemn Vows, such particularly as that call'd *Ver Sacrum*, shed the Blood of an infinite number of Beasts, build more Temples and Altars, institute Feasts and publick Games in honor of the Gods, call in new Divinitys: As when the *Romans* sent to † *Epidaurum* for the God *Esculapius* after a raging Pestilence; and to ‖ *Pessinunta* for the Goddess *Cybele* after some Showers of Stones which had fallen in *Italy*.

* See Peucer. de divinat. generibus, p. 15. † The 461 Year of Rome, Liv. l. 10. ‖ The 548 Year of Rome. Liv. dec. 3. l. 9.

SECT. LXII. *That the Pagans, when warn'd by Presages, us'd no proper means for appeasing the Wrath of God.*

FROM hence it follows that all the Pagan Discipline, upon the warnings of Prodigys, for appeasing the Wrath of God, was by no means proper to appease that of the only true God, or to weaken the dominion of Sin in the Hearts of Men: for had this really been the case, the Demons had certainly alter'd their Conduct in this particular; and consequently the Prodigys which stun'd these Idolatrous People, were no ways fitted for bringing 'em to that Repentance which turns away the Arrows of God's Wrath; but on the contrary very likely to hurry 'em to such Excesses, as might make his Anger burn more fierce. Hence it manifestly follows, that God never created Comets to awaken the People's Fears, and declare, that unless they expiated their Offences, they shou'd be severely punish'd.

SECT. LXIII. *The Demons caus'd many natural Effects to be taken for Prodigys.*

SO true it is, that Prodigys were only proper for upholding the Worship of false Gods, that the Demons, who labour'd to propagate Idolatry all manner of ways, made it their principal endeavor to have as many things pass for Prodigys denouncing the Wrath of God, as possible. Was there any Monster born in the Country, a Dog with two Faces, or a Calf with six Feet? this was enough to call together the whole Possè of Priests in the Capital City, to consult on means for turning away the Mischief this Prodigy

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portended. They were to inquire what God or Goddess had not had his due, and make amends for past Omissions by more numerous Sacrifices; otherwise 'twas to be fear'd Victory wou'd go over to the Enemy's side, and expose the Publick Affairs to the last extremity. The Eruptions of Mount *Etna*, or *Vesuvius*; Earthquakes, Meteors of a scarce kind, as Thunder in a serene Sky; Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, the stroke of a Thunderbolt; all pass'd for Presages of some Mischief or other so infallible, that no cost nor pains was spar'd to avert the Blow. Such a Hurricane as we had in *Champagne* or *Poland* last year, was enough to imploy all the Colleges of Augurs and Soothsayers for two or three months together, in consulting the Oracles, the Magick Lots of *Præneste*, the Sybils Books, the old wormeaten Rolls which contain'd the Discipline of the *Hetrurians*, and whatever else might instruct 'em how to lay the prognosticated Storm. The Inundations of Rivers were evil Augurys likewise, as * *Horace* informs us, when he enumerates the Prodigys insuing the Death of *Cesar*, which made the People afraid that *Jupiter* was bringing a second Deluge upon the World: For speaking of the Snow, the Hail, and the Lightning, he proceeds to the overflowing of *Tiber*. *Virgil* confirms the same thing, and gives a List of Prodigys, with the addition of many more particulars: He brings in Specters and Apparitions, Houlings of Wolves, Clashings of Arms in the Air, speaking brute Beasts, Streams of Gore, Statues running down with Sweat, Comets, and several other things I must

* *Vidimus flavum Tiberim retortis, &c. Od. 2. lib. 1.*

beg you to read over, they seem so finely describ'd; there you shall find the overflowings of the *Po*†. Read likewise the Comment of *Servius* upon these words of *Virgil*, and you shall see the Swellings of Rivers are not only to be fear'd on account of the present Damage, but because of the Evils they presage, which the People I remember expected at *Paris* in 1649, when the *Seine* swel'd extraordinarily. || *Plutarch*, * *Tacitus*, †† *Livy*, and others confirm, that the Overflowing of *Tiber* was reckon'd a very ill Presage.

I wish also you'd look into the latter end of the first Book of *Lucan's Pharsalia*, and the beginning of the Second; there you'll find the fullest confirmation of what I wou'd prove in this place. You'll see that Prodigys in abundance were the forerunners of the Civil Wars between *Cesar* and *Pompey*, and that the Gods crouded Sea, and Sky, and Land with 'em. There you shall see Comets; you shall see fiery Meteors more than ever your Reverence dictated in your famous Course of Philosophy. There you shall find Eclipses, Eruptions of Mount *Etna*, Earthquakes, Inundations, Statues speaking and sweating, groaning Tombstones, Monsters, Apparitions of the Brain, Enthusiasms, and a world more of the same kind. You shall see the Result was, not a Reformation of Manners, or condemning false Opinions in the Worship of God, the only things the true God aims at by the Signs he gives of his Anger; but Consults of Diviners, the

† *Proluit infano contorquens vertice Sylvas,
Fluviorum Rex Eridanus*——— *Virgil. Georgic. l. 1.*

|| *In Vita Othon.* * *Annal. lib. 1.* †† *Lib. 5. & 7. & 30.*
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oldest of whom imposes for their whole Penance on the *Roman* People, some Processions about the City, or Freaks of Superstition, as destroying perhaps all the Monsters to be found in the Land. Here you shall see an old Augur, and an old Vestal, put the City into such a Consternation; he by the fatal Presages observ'd in the Entrails of a Sacrifice, she by her Prophecys, which she ran publishing about the Streets; that all the *Roman* Matrons flew to the Adoration of the Images, whilst the Men stood venting themselves in Murmurs at the Cruelty of Fate: Things, as you see, directly opposite to the Will of God. *Silius Italicus* gives such another Catalogue of Prodigys about the latter end of his eighth Book of the War of *Carthage*, and pretends, the *Romans* were hereby forewarn'd of the dreadful Destruction *Hannibal* was bringing upon 'em. *Statius* gives such another Catalogue in his seventh Book of the *Thebaide*. *Claudian* does the same in his second Invektive against *Eutropius*. And *Petronius*, that famous Debauchee and Arch-Libertine, goes farther than any of the rest; see his Essay or Introduction to a Heroick Poem upon the Civil War, inserted in his Works. They all pretend the Disturbances in the State were presag'd by these Prodigys, but don't tell us who was made wiser or better by 'em.

SECT. LXIV. *Whether I make Advantage of the Authority of Poets.*

DON'T tell me I'm wrong in making use of the Authority of the Poets, after having branded it from the beginning, because I don't alledg

alledg 'em to prove these Prodigys did in reality happen, but only to shew, the People look'd on things of this kind as evil Augurys, and became more and more culpable. Besides, I can tell you, 'twere as easy to bring the Testimony of the most famous Historians as that of the Poets: Only 'tis so notorious, that the Pagans look'd on a hundred things which come to pass naturally, and are altogether indifferent in themselves, as evil Presages, whose Consequences they were oblig'd to avert by a thousand Ceremonys of their false Religion; that there's no necessity of justifying it from Books, or sending any one for satisfaction to *Julius Obsequens*, that just and faithful Collector upon this Head.

SECT. LXV. *How Men might happen of themselves to take certain things for Prodigys.*

I Shall only observe, the Demons had no hard Task to persuade there was Prodigy and Mystery almost in every thing: For we must own, to the Scandal of Human kind, it has a strong propensity this way; and in all probability the Soil was so kindly for this sort of Fruit, that it had brought forth in abundance without the trouble of cultivating. I can easily conceive how Men sunk in Ignorance and Error, might come to have sad Apprehensions of future Evils, on the sight of an Eclipse of the Sun or Moon; and that the natural Ideas we have of God's dispensing Good and Evil by his Providence, shou'd incline 'em to believe, the depriving 'em of this heavenly Light might forebode his impending Wrath. I can conceive

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ceive too how Thunder and Lightning might fill 'em with Terrors, both as to the present and the future, in a persuasion, that this Lord of the World might signify, by these dreadful Peals, the Causes of which were utterly unknown to 'em, that he was not altogether satisfy'd with Human kind.

** Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor ardua cœlo
Fulmina cum caderent, discussaque mania flammis,
Atque ictus flagraret Athos.——*

I say the same of Earthquakes, Inundations, Hurricanes, Tempests, Fires bursting forth impetuously from the Bowels of Mountains: And because Minds once struck with Fear, by Objects which justly command this Passion, are apter to be mov'd by those which do not, it's very easily conceiv'd how Men, dispirited by these frightful Phenomena, might be startled at the sight of things less considerable, and insensibly entertain a general distrust of every uncommon Effect; not knowing, for want of a little true Philosophy, that those very Effects, not ordinary in the World, as the Production of Monsters, are notwithstanding as properly natural Effects, as those daily and ordinarily produc'd: insomuch that the same Law of Nature, which in such and such Circumstances returns the perfect Species of a Bitch from a Bitch, does in others bring forth a monstrous Litter.

* Petronius.

SECT. LXVI. *That what we call Prodigys are, generally speaking, as natural as the most common things.*

THEY who understand this, get over the difficulty with ease, and clearly perceive, that whether an Animal bring forth a Monster, or the perfect Species, the Author of Nature keeps on in his own high way, and follows the general Law he has laid himself under. From whence they infer, that the Birth of a Monster is no Indication of his Wrath, since its Production is so necessary in the order of that Law he has establish'd, that to prevent it, he must have swerv'd from this very Law; that is, must work a Miracle: Which shews the Production of the Monster is as natural as that of a perfect Dog, and therefore that one does not threaten us with a Calamity any more than the other. The same may be said of Eclipses: For 'tis no more natural to the Moon to enlighten the Earth in the Circumstances in which she does illuminate, or be in these Circumstances at the time she is actually in 'em; than it is for her to want her Light when she does, or be in the Situation which deprives her of Light, whenever she comes into this Situation. And I make no doubt there had been Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, tho Men had never sin'd: from whence it follows, they are not Menaces which concern Mankind. This is such a Truth, that when God Almighty will'd the Sun shou'd bear witness by its Darknes at the adorable Mystery of the Passion of JESUS CHRIST, he pitch'd on a time at which this Darknes cou'd

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not possibly be natural. But as there's need of some degree of Philosophy to attain the knowledge of these Effects, I can easily conceive how People might be led into Error and Superstition, by seeing certain natural Effects less common than others.

SECT. LXVII. *Of the prodigious Superstition of the Pagans with respect to Prodigys.*

TO return to the superstitious Blindside the Devil had found out in the Mind of man, I say further, that this Enemy of God and of our Salvation had driven the nail so far, and so improv'd the advantage for changing Religion, in it self the best of things, into a Rhapsody of Extravagance, Foppery, Caprice, and criminal Enormity; that he had run the wisest People into the most ridiculous and abominable Idolatry 'tis possible to conceive.

It had not satisfy'd him, that Mankind looking on Eclipses, Hurricanes, Thunder, as ominous Signs, had establish'd an infinite variety of false Worshipps, in hopes of averting the Evils they believ'd were presag'd: but he try'd their Ingenuity at inventing superstitious Ceremonys, and multiplying the number of Gods *in infinitum*, by making People fancy hints of Good and Evil in every thing which presented, and by suggesting that such a God declar'd his Will by the flight of Birds; another by the Entrails of Beasts; another by the croaking of a Crow on the right Hand or the left; another by a Sneeze, by a chance Expression, by a Dream, by the squeeking of a Mouse, and a world of ways besides 'twere tiresom

tiresom to tell, for there's really no end on't. The Visions of a Woman, troubled it may be with Fits of the Mother, were matter enough for a hundred religious Consultations, and once oblig'd the * *Roman* Senate to order the repairing of the Temple of *Juno*. The News of the least Prodigy sometimes put the Pontiff and all his Priests to a stand; for if after having cut the Throats of as many Victims as they judg'd sufficient for the occasion, any Disgrace in their Army interven'd, they were to understand the Expiation had not been perfected, and 'twas to be done over again. *Hannibal* having won the Battel of *Thrasimene*, the Dictator *Fabius Maximus* represented to the Senate, that this Misfortune had befall'n the Publick, rather thro a neglect in the Ceremonys of Religion, than the rashness or incapacity of the General: Whereupon having consulted the *Sybil's* Books, 'twas found that a solemn Vow, made to the God *Mars*, was not perform'd with the requisite Ceremonys, and therefore must be gone over again, even with greater Pomp, and the addition of several other Acts of Religion; the Particulars of which are to be seen in the 22d Book of *Livy*.

There were so many things besides to balk the Expiation, that 'tis amazing how they had leisure for any other Business beside the Worship of their false Gods. *Plutarch* † informs, that one of their solemn Processions, in which they carry'd the Images of their Gods in stately Litters thro the City, was begun anew, only because of one side a resty Horse, belonging to the Train, stop'd

* Cicero lib. 1. de Divinat. † In vita Coriolani.

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short in the March, and refus'd to draw ; and on the other side, one of the Drivers took the Reins of the Bridle in his left Hand : That on another occasion they repeated the same Sacrifice thirty times running, because they still suspected the want of some Formality or other in the Ceremony || : That *Q. Sulpitius* was depos'd from the Office of High Priest, because the Sacerdotal Cap fell from his Head while sacrificing : and that *C. Flaminius*, nam'd General of the Horse by the Dictator *Minutius*, was laid aside, because at the instant he was nam'd they heard the squeeking of a Mouse. One may find many other Examples of the same force in *Plutarch*, and in other unsuspected Authors, without referring to that witty Passage in * *Arnobius*, where he turns the Pagans so handsomly into ridicule, tho he enters not far into the Subject, and says nothing more than *Cicero*, in his Harangue *de Haruspicum Responsis*.

You see, Sir, the Spirit of the Pagan Religion : All was Sign or Prodigy in its Judgment ; so that they had reason at *Rome*, when *Ventidius* was chosen Consul, formerly a Muledriver, to sing † a Ballad about the Streets, desiring the Augurs and

|| In vita Marcelli. * In ceremoniis vestris rebusque divinis postulationibus locus est, & piaculi dicitur contracta esse commissio. Si per imprudentiæ lapsus, aut in verbo quispiam, aut simpuvio deerrarit, aut si cursu in solennibus ludis curricularisque divinis : commissum omnes statim in religiones clammatis sacras, si ludius constitit, aut Tibicen repente conticuit, aut si patrimus ille qui vocatur puer omisit per ignorantiam lorum, aut terram tenere non potuit. *Arnob. l. 4. adv. Gentes.*

† Concurrere omnes Augures, Aruspices, Portentum inusitatum conflatum est recens ; nam mulos qui fricabat Consul factus est. *A. Gellius Noct. Attic. lib. 15. cap. 4.*

Soothsayers to meet quickly, and consider what so prodigious an Adventure might presage; for they assembled ordinarily, and order'd Purifications at least, upon every trivial occasion. But what amazes me is, they never look'd on themselves as Prodigys; or that, as * *Cato* said, they cou'd ever look at one another without laughing. I'm amaz'd they never beheld the Credulity of so many great Men, as a Monster needing the most refin'd Expiations. In reality, one sees a stranger Error in Nature, and something more monstrous in the *Roman* Senate's approving all the ridiculous Superstitions of the Augurs, that Body compos'd of so many Heroes, and Persons illustrious for Wit, and Bravery, and Capacity; than in a Spaniel Bitch's bringing a Whelp into the World with two Heads. On the whole we must allow, that the Devil has had wonderful Success in practising on the human Mind, and in filling up the measure of its natural Credulity, by furnishing from all hands matter of Fear, and of Apprehensions from the Vengeance of the immortal Gods.

SECT. LXVIII. *Artifices of the Devil for quickning the Pagan Superstition.*

THAT this Disposition of the human Mind might never wear off, 'twas necessary to keep up the Notion, that all those natural Effects, which were any thing extraordinary, were deriv'd immediately from above; and improve

* *Mirari se aiebat quod non rideret Aruspex Aruspicem cum vidisset. Cicer. lib. 2. de Divinat.*

Earthquakes, Overflowings of Rivers, and all rare Meteors to the utmost. This is what has been effectually done, as I've shewn.

'Twas moreover necessary to frame on occasion, or to imitate several of these rare Phenomena when Nature was backward, or rather when she had furnish'd a few to work on : For never are Men so dispos'd to take mere natural Effects for true Miracles, as when there's a Concurrence of several extraordinary things in several places, and at the same time. Every body is ready to believe this Concurrence and Complication can only come from on high : and tho in other matters the surest way not to be believ'd is to say too much, yet in the case of Miracles it's quite otherwise ; the way to persuade is to keep within no bounds ; the more extraordinary you make 'em, the more you make People see the Finger of God. For this reason, as soon as the way was once open'd by some favorable Conjunctions Nature had presented, 'twas of the highest importance to produce several extraordinary Effects in several Places at once, by applying the Powers of second Causes *, or at least by imploying the Imaginations of the weaker sort, who oftentimes fancy they see Armys in the Air, and hear dismal Crys and Houlings where there never were any : 'Twas of the highest importance, I say, to use these Artifices for spreading the Fame of a world of Prodigys at the same time ; and this is what the Demons have practis'd with great Address. When 'twas in their power to give Nature a ruffle, just at the critical time, to serve a turn, they made the

* *Applicando activa passivis.*

most on't, as in the example of *Brennus*. When they perceiv'd second Causes had set Superstition a working, if they cou'd not contribute any thing real by their Skill, they got at least Reports spread of a thousand imaginary Prodigys, which, imaginary as they were, serv'd to corroborate one another, and by their good Reception among the credulous, to give People an itch for reporting others as ill founded as they. *There happen'd in Rome (they are Livy's* words) and in the Places adjacent, many Prodigys during this Winter; at least there were many talk'd of, and believ'd upon slight Grounds, as the Custom is, when once Mens Minds run into religious Fears.* — They publish'd a great many Prodigys this Year; and the more simple and devout they found to believe 'em, the more they publish'd. This is undoubtedly the Reason of † *Claudian's* saying, that as soon as one Prodigy is hatch'd, all the rest croud forward for fear of losing their Tide.

SECT. LXIX. *That the Pagans imputed their Sufferings to the Neglect of some religious Ceremony, and not to their moral Transgressions.*

BUT for fear the same Disposition of Mind might incline Men to worship the Divinity in the way which right Reason prescribes, by the

* *Romæ autem & circa urbem multa eâ hyeme prodigia facta, aut multa nunciata & temerè credita, quod evenire solet motis semel in religionem animis—Prodigia eo anno multa nunciata sunt, quæ quo magis credebant simplices ac religiosi homines, eo etiâ plura nunciabantur. Liv. lib. 1. dec. 3.*

† — *Utque semel paruit monstris iter omnia tempus Nacta suum properant nasci. — Claud. l. 2, in Eutrop.*

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Practice of Vertue, and by parting with their Vices; 'twas absolutely necessary to regulate the Peoples Devotion by this Principle, That these Signs of Divine Wrath did not import, the Gods were offended at the Corruption of their Manners, but at the Neglect of some Sacrifice or religious Ceremony; and that the only Means of appeasing 'em was by restoring the vigorous Practice of this Ceremony, or inventing others in its room, without giving themselves the Uneasiness of subduing their Lusts and Passions. This point the Demons pursu'd the closest, not without Successes, of which they had Reason enough to boast: For 'tis evident from profane History, the Pagans ever trac'd the Source of all their Chastisements to the Omission of some superstitious Rite, and not to the Impurity of their Conversation; and upon this Principle thought it sufficient if they restor'd the Practice of that particular Ceremony.

The * *Carthaginians* seeing their Army routed by *Agathocles* King of *Syracuse*, and their Capital City besieg'd, cou'd not comprehend how they deserv'd so severe an Affliction, unless for changing the Custom of sacrificing their own Children chosen by Lots to the God *Saturn*, into that of sacrificing strange Children, bought up and rear'd for this purpose; and therefore to atone for their Offence, and appease incens'd Heaven, they introduc'd the antient Usage, by a publick Sacrifice of two hundred Youths of Quality † chosen by lot out of the noblest Familys. This Custom was so inveterately establish'd among 'em, that we find it

* Dionys. Halicar. l. 1. † Lactant. de falsa Relig. l. 1. c. 21.

practis'd in private to the Days of *Tertullian*, tho the Emperor *Tiberius* * had taken the most effectual Means for abolishing it, by ordering all the Priests to be crucify'd who shou'd be convicted of sacrificing these innocent Victims. Whilst *Hannibal* was overrunning *Italy* with his Arms, the Lots decreed his eldest Son to this barbarous Imolation; but the Mother, who it may be had never reflected on the Enormity of such a Practice, perceiv'd it plainly then, and made so lively Remonstrances, that the Senate of *Carthage*, perplex'd between their Fear of the Gods and that of *Hannibal*, and who in reality dreaded provoking the one more than they hop'd to appease the others, durst not get over this point, but dispatcht an Express to *Hannibal* to know his Pleasure. *Hannibal* bluntly refus'd to let his Son die, and sent 'em word 'twas much better to preserve him for the Service of his Country; that he'd take care to sacrifice so many *Roman* Lives, that the Gods might have no Cause to complain of their being depriv'd of such a Victim. He invites 'em to the sight of that Slaughter in which he's ready to commute :

*Vos quoque Dii patrii, quorum delubra piantur
Cadibus, atque coli gaudent formidine matrum,
Huc latos vultus, totasque advertite mentes.*

I shou'd tire you, Sir, to quote all the Passages I have met with to this purpose; and besides, Ecclesiastical History, in which you are so thorowly vers'd, affords enough to spare me the trouble of

* Apologet. cap. 9.

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such a Collection. There you may see the Pagans continually charging the Christians as Authors of all the Evils which afflicted the *Roman Empire*, because they preach'd down the Worship of false Gods, and put a stop to it wherever they were uppermost. The Tyrant *Maximin* upbraids 'em with this in his Edicts *: *Is it any Wonder* (says † *Porphyry*) *the Town shou'd be visited with a Pestilence, when Esculapius and the other Gods are turn'd out of it? Since the Worship of JESUS has been introduc'd, we have had no Assistance from the Gods.* St. *Austin's* chief design, in his Book *de Civitate Dei*, is to answer the Heathens, who complain'd, the Sacking of *Rome*, and all the Ravages of the *Goths* in the *Roman Empire*, were owing to the Contempt of Idols. *Radagesus's* || Irruption into *Italy* at the Head of 200000 Men, made People murmur terribly at the Christian Religion; they exaggerated all the Troubles which hapned under the Christian Emperors, and the Felicity of Pagan *Rome*. This was the Subject the eloquent *Symmachus* turn'd to with most Passion; he who had the Front to write to ** Christian Emperors, that the Famine and all other Evils afflicting the Empire, were the just Punishments of the general Contempt of the Gods and their Ministers; that they shou'd not charge 'em to the Influences of the Stars, or the Rigors of Winter, or Droughts of Summer, but to the immediate Displeasure of the Gods, highly provok'd to see their Priests and Vestals rob'd of the Revenues allotted for their Maintenance. The same Christian Emperors having put a stop to the

* Euseb. lib. 9. cap. 7. † Apud Euseb. Præpar. Evang.
 || Sigebert. Gemblac. in Chron. ad an. 407. ** Epist. 54. l. 10.

Sacrifices the *Egyptians* offer'd to the River *Nile*, when its Waters did not overflow to such a level, the People rose in a furious Sedition, and resolv'd to continue their Sacrifices at the hazard of their Lives; firmly persuaded the omission of this Holy Ceremony must bring a Curse upon the Land, and stop the Bounty of the *Nile* †.

SECT. LXX. *The Application of these Remarks to the 7th Reason from Religion.*

WHAT think you, Sir, of this long Digression? Have not I fairly shook hands with my Argument from Religion? But have a little patience, you shall see I meet it again in the turn; and that this Excursion into an Idolatrous Land has not been wholly unserviceable. For having laid down, as you remember, 1. That the things taken for Indications of the Wrath of God, far from weakning the dominion of Sin, serv'd only to invigorate the sacrilegious Worship of Idols; 2. That the Demons cou'd not possibly light on a choicer Secret for enlarging the Borders of Idolatry, than astonishing the Sense with Prodigys true or false; 3. That the real or seeming appearance of a Prodigy did constantly command new ways of worshipping the false Gods: Having, I say, establish'd these Premises, I have evidently prov'd, That shou'd God have form'd these vast Comets, commonly taken for Signs of the Divine Anger, in a miraculous manner, he had by Miracles concur'd with the Demons in sinking men deeper in Pagan Superstition; which

† Hist. Tripart. lib. 9. cap. 42.

is not to be spoke nor thought on without horror and impiety. Once more, Sir, setting these Comets a blaze in the Sky, considering how the Heathens were turn'd, was, properly speaking, to put 'em on redoubling their Idolatrous Devotions all the World over: and, humanly speaking, this was all God cou'd expect from it.

SECT. LXXI. *God's Abhorrence of Idolatry.*

THINK a little whether this Conduct be consistent with the Idea of God, and it be possible that the same God who declares by his Prophets, nothing is so abominable in his Eyes as the Worship of Idols; who expresses a fiercer indignation at his Peoples offering Sacrifice in the Groves, and on the high Places, or bowing down to the Gods of the Heathens, than when guilty of Theft, Murder, or Adultery; who begins his Holy Law by a double Command, against having any other God than himself; who to give the greater force to his Command, represents himself under the Notion of a God All-powerful and Jealous, visiting the Sins of the rebellious Fathers to the third and fourth Generation, and shewing his Mercy to the thousandth Generation of him who keeps this Commandment; that is, who to manifest how earnestly he desires to be obey'd in this instance, touches Men in the tenderest part, by the threat of a *Jealous* God (an Image which can only waken the Dread of the swiftest fiercest Vengeance) and by the Offers of a Love more boundless than the Wrath of his Jealousy; who to express how far the Sin of Idolatry exceeds all others,

thers, takes care in forbidding it, to give this particular Law so strong a Sanction, whereas he contents himself with the simple Precept against Theft, Murder, Adultery, Calumny; who punish'd the Worship of the Golden Calf by the fear-fullest of all Punishments, by giving up his People to worship the Host of Heaven, that Inlet to all the Train of Misery, Exile, and lamentable Captivity which afterwards befel 'em, as the glorious Proto-martyr St. *Stephen* * assures us; who, in a word, won't suffer Men so much as to tast of things sacrific'd to Idols: Consider, I pray, Sir, whether 'tis possible the same God who has taken all this Precaution, shou'd notwithstanding from time to time expose new blazing Stars in the Heavens to intimidate the Nations of the Earth, and thereby infallibly drive 'em into all the various Excesses of Idolatry, which each imagin'd the properest means of expiating their Offences, and disarming the Wrath of God; The *Gauls* for example, and *Carthaginians*, to sacrifice their Children by hundreds. Execrable Abomination! which God by the Mouth of his Prophets detests so vehemently in the Jewish People, who in imitation of the neighbouring Nations offer'd their Sons and Daughters to Idols; and for which he punish'd *Ahaz* and *Manasseh*, Kings of *Israel*, in so exemplary a manner.

* Acts c. 7. v. 41.

SECT. LXXII. *That the Reasons why Comets cou'd not be the Presages of Evil before the coming of JESUS CHRIST, subsist still.*

IF this Reason be sufficient to prove the Comets which appear'd before the preaching of the Gospel, were not produc'd by an extraordinary Providence, to warn Men of the Evils which God in his Anger was preparing for 'em, 'tis evident that those which have since appear'd, were far from being miraculous Productions design'd to presage our Calamitys.

First, Because if Comets before the Calling in of the *Gentiles*, were not Signs appointed by God, their Appearance was the pure Effect of natural Causes, as well as Eclipses, Earthquakes, &c. And if this be granted, 'twill be as ridiculous to say, Comets have chang'd their kind since the Conversion of the *Gentiles*, and are now no longer the Works of Nature, but Signs miraculously form'd, as it wou'd be to imagine all Eclipses ever since the Gospel were turn'd into supernatural Effects. Now if Comets be purely the Works of Nature, 'tis plain they're not the Presages of Evils to come; as well because there's no natural connexion between those Evils and them, as I have already shewn, and as I shall more fully hereafter, as because we have no Divine Revelation that God has appointed 'em for Signs, in such a Notion as the Rainbow is a Sign the World shall never be drown'd again.

Secondly, Because the Arguments against it, for the Ages before the Christian Dispensation, hold good for the Ages since: For, notwithstanding the

the wonderful Progress of the Cross of CHRIST, the greater part of Mankind have all along remain'd in Idolatry, or chang'd only for Mahometism; even at this time, when Christianity's spread so wide, and has dawn'd upon the new World, 'tis certain the greatest part of Mankind is still in the horrible darkness of Infidelity. So that were it the Purpose of God in producing Comets to warn men of an approaching Vengeance; it might be properly said his Purpose was, to quicken a false and sacrilegious Devotion almost all the World over; to increase the number of Pilgrims to *Mecca*, and their Offerings to the most infamous of all Impostors; to cause more Moschs to be built to him, new Rites and Superstitions invented by the *Dervi's*; in a word, more Abominations committed than otherwise wou'd be. For tho *Jupiter* and *Saturn* are long since out o' date, Men are still given up as much as ever to the most extravagant and criminal Idolatrys.

SECT. LXXIII. *Of the abominable Idolatry of the Modern Pagans.*

TO pass over all the Abominations practis'd in *Peru* and *Mexico* not many Ages ago, and their prodigious slaughters of Men in * sacrifice to Idols, to which the *Spaniards* have put a stop in the Parts where they have settled; who does not know what shocking Superstitions the *Indians*, the *Chinese*, and the People of *Japan* practise at this Day; that they fall down to a Heifer, to a Mon-

* See *Vigenere's Annot. upon Cesar*, pag. 317. *Montagne's Essays*, L. 1. cap. 19.

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ky; that they venture † upon burning Mountains to consult their Demon, bury themselves alive in honour of their false Gods, drown themselves out of Devotion, which is one of the fairest steps to Canonization; that they build Temples to the Devil, and to the Prince of Devils expressly, and by Name (what the antient Pagans were never guilty of) that they run, in short, into all the Excesses a stone-blind furious Superstition can inspire? Now, Sir, as you well know, there's so near a connexion between believing the God we adore incens'd, and hurrying to all the Dutys of the establish'd Worship; that to will an Idolatrous People's knowing Heaven is offended, is directly willing they shou'd exercise all the Acts of their Religion with a redoubled Zeal: and consequently shou'd Almighty God produce Comets o' purpose to make Men understand he was highly displeas'd, and that unless they appeas'd his just Indignation, they might expect the severest Chastisements, he must be construed to will, that all the unbelieving Nations shou'd fly with new Ardor each to its own Worship and abominable Ways. Which as 'tis false and impious, we are oblig'd by the Principles of our Religion to maintain, that Comets in the Intention of God are no Presages of Evils to come; taking always along with us, that whenever there appears any extraordinary Blaze or Fire in the Heavens, visible only to some one City or Country which knows the true God, as of old over the City of *Jerusalem*, there we are at liberty to look on't as a Sign expressly vouchsaf'd to that People by a particular Indulgence.

† See the Account of Japan by the Dutch Company.

SECT. LXXIV. *That Comets have particular Characters upon 'em, which shew they are not Presages.*

BUT to imagine that a Star which makes the Tour of the World once a Day, and which does not carry in its Countenance any particular ill-Will to Christians more than Infidels, the French more than the Spaniard, shou'd be a presaging Prodigy, which every single Nation is oblig'd to regard, as expressly created to give them notice of an approaching Calamity, is imagining what can never really be; because, besides all my former Reasons, 'tis Nonsense that every particular Nation shou'd be oblig'd to fear and tremble on the sight of a Comet. For it's evident from all History, and even from every Man's Observation during his short stay in this World, that God never chastises all Men at one and the same time. The most universal Judgments spare intire Nations. The Divine Providence dispenses its Blessings and Curses in such a measure, that all have their Portions in their turn: but never was a general Chastisement of Mankind since *Noah's Flood*; never a Profusion of general good Fortune at the same time. To act otherwise, God must change the whole course of his Providence: For as the Experience of a great many Comets convinces us he never acted in so extraordinary a manner heretofore, so we have no ground to believe, when we see new Stars of this kind appear, he will begin to do so now. We are convinc'd by the Events which follow'd upon Comets, that the Design of Providence was not to plunge all the Nations of the

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the World into one common Abyfs of Woes: Far from it; we know its purpose juſt then was to heap Bleſſings on ſeveral of 'em. Conſequently they were not all oblig'd, on the Appearance of Comets, to conclude, they were to be overwhelm'd with Miſerys; nor was it poſſible, conſidering the ordinary courſe of Providence, they ſhou'd; God for the moſt part making uſe of one Nation to ſcourge another, and beſtowing upon that what he takes from this. If when the *Persians* might have fear'd the Deſtruction of their Empire, the *Macedonians* ſhou'd have fear'd the Overthrow of theirs; is it not plain the latter had been in a miſtake? From hence I infer, were it the Intention of God that all Nations on the ſight of Comets ſhou'd believe their Ruin near, the Intention of God wou'd be that many Nations ſhou'd be deceiv'd, thoſe for example he ordains for conquering ſuch Kingdoms, as his Wiſdom thinks fit to deſtroy. Now as 'twou'd be impious to believe God has any ſuch Intentions, 'tis impoſſible the *Macedonians*, for inſtance, ſhou'd be oblig'd, under the pain of mortal Sin, to believe the Comet which appear'd at the beginning of *Alexander's* Reign, threatned 'em with a dreadful Deſtruction. God therefore not being capable of obliging Men to make wrong Judgments, 'tis impoſſible he ſhou'd oblige all the Nations of the World to conclude a Comet the Prefage of their Ruin. Yet this muſt be his Intention if the common Opinion hold; 'tis therefore an erroneous Opinion, and has no other Plea againſt downright Impiety, than Mens making little or no Reflection on the Nature and Circumſtances of Comets, when they take 'em for Signs of the Divine Malediction.

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'Tis very probable they wou'd not interpret 'em as Prodigys from Heaven, did they reflect with a steddy Thought, 1. That there are no certain Marks upon 'em, by which any particular Nation shou'd perceive their Mischief design'd against them. 2. That if they have a Commission to denounce the Wrath of God, they denounce it to all Nations at large, as well those whom God designs to favour, as those he designs to afflict. 3. That they are very equivocal Presages; such, for example, as cou'd not portend the Ruin of the *Greek Empire*, without portending the Rise of the *Ottoman*; the Death of a Pope, without presaging the Elevation of a Cardinal; or the Death of a mighty Conqueror, without presaging publick Rejoicings in the Countrys which fear'd the heavy Yoke of his Dominion. 4. That they are Signs of a general mystical kind, which have no express Characters of the Evils really to come, more than of those which never shall. 5. Last of all, that they are Signs attended with several Circumstances, inconsistent with the Wisdom and Holiness of God. I have touch'd on some of these Circumstances already, in speaking of Eclipses, and my whole Argument from Religion runs on no other head.

You may think what you please, Sir; but for my part I can never persuade my self, that God proposes any other end in the Production of Comets with respect to us, I mean, than what he proposes in all his other Works of Nature. They who raise their Thoughts to God by a Contemplation of the Works of Nature, undoubtedly answer the End he propos'd in the Variety of his Creatures; but I can't conceive how a Man, who takes that
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for a Miracle which is not so, falls in with the Creator's End; because it can't appear to me, that ever God propos'd this End for one, to make Men pass false Judgments. Upon this foot I conclude, if God design'd to give Men formal Notice of the Evils betiding 'em, he wou'd use Means for this purpose, not only intelligible to those he meant to threaten, but which shou'd not threaten those whom he meant to favor. Thus much might serve to degrade Comets from that rank they have held among Prodigys, which are Heralds of the Wrath of God: For it belongs to the fabulous Divinitys of *Pan* and *Apollo* only, to fill Mens Heads with false Alarms, and never exprefs themselves but by Enigmas.

SECT. LXXV. *In what Sense it may be said, that God threatens those whom he designs not to chastise.*

I. I'M well aware of what is commonly said of *Thunder, that it strikes only here and there, but awes the World: I know too this is a prudent Method in punishing a Body of Mutineers. But it proves no more, than that the Plagues Almighty God pours out on a Nation, ought to make their Neighbors dread his Justice, and induce 'em to merit the Continuation of their Happiness by the Practice of good Works: Which is very wide of their Error, who maintain that an Effect purely natural, is no less than a Miracle wrought expressly by God, to forewarn each particular Nation of its approaching Destruction, when

* Cum seriant unum, non unum fulmina terrent.

yet this is farthest from his Thoughts: For it has been often found, he was just then preparing Rejoicings and Triumphs for several Nations. Add to this, that Thunder is within reach to do Mischief, and often leaves such terrible Marks before our Eyes, that there's no Error in believing we may be hurt by it; whereas we have no Ground to imagin Comets have ever done, or ever been able to do the least harm: Besides, that it wou'd be a wrong Attempt, and far from meritorious, to make us believe Thunder expresly and designedly form'd to punish Sinners.

SECT. LXXVI. *'Tis false that People who are happy after the Appearance of Comets, have merited this Distinction by their Repentance.*

II. **A**S for those who pretend Comets threaten all alike, because in reality God has a purpose of punishing all; but that there are always some Nations which disarm his Justice by Repentance: I shall make 'em only this Answer, They are notoriously mistaken.

They'd oblige me highly in shewing by what kind of Mortification the *Macedonians* appeas'd the Wrath of God, and merited all the Wealth and Crowns of King *Darius*, in the room of those Chastisements design'd 'em by the Comet I took notice of before.

I shou'd thank 'em too, did they inform me what particular Acts of Penance and Devotion sav'd *Mahomet II.* from a share in those Calamitys due to him as well as the rest of Mankind, by virtue of the Comets appearing in his Reign. He was the rankest

rankest Atheist under Heaven; his Troops committed all the most enormous Crimes which cou'd be thought on, yet went on subduing the Kingdoms and Empires of *Christendom*.

Let's confess then, 'tis not the way of God, just when a Comet appears, to fall a punishing all the Nations of the World.

His Providence sees it fitter to punish 'em by turns, and by the Hands of one another. The *Macedonians* were not one jot a juster People than the *Persians*; but because the time was come when God thought fit to put a Period to the *Persian* Monarchy, he executed his purpose by the Hand of the *Macedonian*.

These fulfil'd their course, and yielded to the *Roman* Arms; who heaping Victory on Victory, and subduing far and wide Kingdoms and Commonwealths, tho no more righteous than the People God deliver'd into their Hands, wound up their bottom, if I may use the Expression; and heap'd the Judgments of God on their own Heads, as St. *Austin* observes, to shew the Idolaters, who charg'd the Gospel of Peace with the Publick Calamitys, that they were in reality the Fruits of their own Degeneracy, and total Depravation. Be that how it will, the *Roman* Empire, which was form'd out of Usurpation and Violence, was dissolved the same way; Divine Providence exemplifying from time to time in human Affairs, what we see daily come to pass in the course of necessary Causes, some of which compound into one gross Body, which darkens the Face of Heaven, all the scattering Clouds; and others rend the great Scrole again into an infinite Variety of fleeting Wreck.

What I observ'd, that the Nations of the Earth are afflicted each in its turn, without regard to the small differences of Demerit between the first and last afflicted, is not a bare Conjecture. God himself declares as much by his Prophet *Jeremy*: * *I have made the Earth, the Man and the Beast that are upon the Ground, by my great Power, and by my out-stretch'd Arm; and have given it to whom it seem'd meet unto me. And now have I given all these Lands into the Hands of Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon, my Servant; and the Beasts of the Field have I given him also to serve him. And all Nations shall serve him, and his Son, and his Son's Son, until the very time of his Land shall come.* 'Twere ridiculous to imagin, the King of Babylon was juster and holier than the King of Judah, or that the Conquest of an Empire was the just reward of his Piety: It may be he was worse than any of the Kings God deliver'd into his Hands; but because the *Chaldean's* Day was not yet come, his Ambition was a lucky Vice, made use of by God for revealing his Justice upon Nations, whose Punishment he wou'd no longer defer. The *Chaldean's* Day came next in turn: The *Medes* and *Persians*, full as wicked Nations as they, but of a later date in the Book of Providence, wasted and subdu'd them, to be subdu'd and wasted themselves when their Day was come. Let's remember the express words of the Son of God, concerning those on whom the Tower in *Siloam* fell, and those *Galileans* whose Blood *Herod* mingl'd with his Sacrifices; and we shan't presume to affirm, that they who are a

* Jer. 27. 5, &c.

Scourge to others, are better Men than they who are scourg'd.

I confess the Patience of God generally suffers Sinners to fill up the measure of their Iniquity, before he makes 'em feel the Rigor of his Justice: From whence it might be infer'd, the Nations spar'd had not yet fill'd up their measure, equal to those who have taken their Punishment. But we must not understand by this filling up their measure, that one Nation is more or less criminal than another: To come up to this Fulness, means no more, than that they are come to the fatal Hour in which God has decreed to punish! And who doubts sometimes this fatal Hour is limited to a lower measure of Sins, sometimes to a higher, as God thinks good to diversify Events, and manifest his Sovereign Power? Some Men are fanciful enough to observe from History, that general Revolutions come regularly about after a certain Period of Years; and * instance in I know not how many great Changes hapning exactly five hundred years one after another. I shan't stand to answer these Impertinences, I can hardly forgive my self the Folly of confuting 'em already †. But this I desire these Gentlemen to know, that I challenge all the World to fix from History any certain determinate measure of Forbearance, after which God has never fail'd to vindicate his Justice. Nothing is more infinite than the Diversity we meet with in all the ways of God.

* Peucer. de præc. Divinat. generibus, pag. 30. † Before N. 25.

SECT. LXXVII. *That the efficacious Prayer of the few good among those of the true Religion, can't be pleaded among those of the false.*

III. **W**ILL you say there have always been some righteous Souls, who by their Prayers and good Works have deliver'd their Country from the part it must else have born in the Miserys presag'd by Comets? I'm content you say and believe this, with regard to those of the true Religion. For tho it's reasonable to think, if God once suffer himself to be intreated in behalf of a People, by the Prayers of a few who pass their time in Exercises of Religion, he shou'd never form a design of extirpating that People so long as this little Body intercedes: Tho one shou'd think, if the dire Effects of Comets were to be ward off by Repentance, it shou'd be by the Repentance of the wicked who provok'd the Wrath of God, rather than the Macerations of a few good, whose ways have been always well pleasing to him, and who don't wait for Prodigys to apply to his Service with Fear and Devotion: Tho it seems, that if a small Party of Votarys were sufficient to disarm the Divine Justice, never shou'd any People within the Bosom of the true Church feel the dreadful stroke of God's Vengeance, never destroy one another as they sometimes do, because there's always a remnant of good and holy Souls among the worst. Tho it looks, I say, as if there were room to dispute this point; yet I'm willing to agree, that the good Works of the few who consecrate themselves intirely to God,
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may engage the Favor of Heaven in behalf of a whole Nation. I know the Victory inclin'd to *Joshua's* side or to that of his Enemys, as *Moses* held up his Hands towards Heaven, or let them down. I know it has been said, that from the bottom of Caves, and deep Solitudes, where the primitive Christians chose their Retreats, they rais'd up to Heaven, by the mere Power of Fasting and Prayer, the matter of that Thunder and Lightning which consum'd the Enemys of Christianity. And I make no doubt that good Souls, who consecrate themselves to God, become an Atonement for their Country, and derive the same Advantages on it as were falsely ascrib'd to the Sacrifice of a *Codrus* or *Decius*. But 'twere impious to ascribe the same Efficacy to the Prayer of a Vestal, or the Macerations of an Infidel. So far are they from expiating the Sins of a People, that these and all other Acts and Sacrifices of the Pagan Religion stand foremost in the black Catalogue of those Crimes which drew on 'em the Vengeance of God. *Cato's* handsom Saying to the Mother of a very ill Man, *That when she pray'd Heaven for the Life of her Son, 'twas not so properly a Prayer as an Imprecation against Rome*, is applicable to all Prayers address'd to Idols, whatever *Symmachus* might imagine, who in his Invectives against the Christian Emperors, presumes to tell 'em, that in depriving the Vestals and Pagan Priests of their Maintenance, they were guilty of the Blood of sacred Persons, who ensur'd the Eternity of the *Roman* Empire, by engaging the Assistance and Protection of Heaven, and by drawing down Blessings and Successes on the *Roman* Armys.

SECT. LXXVIII. *A necessary Digression.*

THERE are some other Difficultys to be explain'd, which might render the Force of my 7th Reason suspicious, if past over without a fair Solution. And this I promise to do at large; but shall first take the Liberty of a Digression, shou'd you renew your Charge ever so often, of my being the errantest Rover and Common-place-man alive.

SECT. LXXIX. *VIII Reason, That the common Opinion of Comets being the Presages of Evil, is an old Pagan Superstition, introduc'd and entertain'd among Christians by their Prejudice for Antiquity.*

I Intend to bestow this whole Digression in collecting from all the former Observations, the true Cause of that reigning Prejudice among us, *That Comets are the Presages of Evil.* Let me tell you then, this Opinion is a Remnant of Pagan Superstition convey'd from Father to Son ever since the first Conversions from Paganism; as well because it has taken deep root in the Minds of Men, as because Christians, generally speaking, are as far gone in the Folly of finding Presage in every thing, as Infidels themselves.

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SECT. LXXX. *Of the violent Passion in Human Nature for knowing what shall come to pass, and the Effects of this Passion.*

WE may easily conceive how the Pagans might be brought stedfastly to believe Comets, Eclipses, &c. Prefages of great Alterations, if we consider Man's natural Inclination to plague himself with putting future Cases; his insatiable curiosity of knowing what shall come to pass, and readiness at finding Miracle and Mystery in every thing not happening daily. This desire of prying into Futurity, has given birth to a thousand different kinds of Divination all alike whimsical and impertinent, which the cunninger sort have made a great hand of. When any one has been Rogue enough to think of making a Penny of the simplicity of his Neighbours, and has had a Talent at inventing somewhat to amuse; this has constantly been one of the readiest Projects, to give out he has the Faculty of foretelling things to come. From hence sprung the pretence of Judiciary Astrology: They who first began to consider the Motions of the Heavens, had no other design in view, than enriching their Minds with so noble a Knowledg: And as these were probably Genius's turn'd more to a love of the Sciences * than worldly Gain, they ne'er dreamt of abusing Astrology to a Pick-pocket Trade. But unworthy Wretches in process of time discovering the blind side of Mankind, bethought themselves of making their Market, and to this end gave out

* See Ovid's first Book of the Fasti.

that the Doctrine of the Stars comprehended the knowledg of all things that were, or are, or ever shall be; so that every body for his Mony might come, and have his Fortune told. The better to gull the World, they make believe the Heavens are the Book in which God has written the Destinys of things; and that one need but learn to read the Hand-writing in this Book, which is only the Construction of the Stars, to be able to know the whole History of Destiny. Very learned Men, *Origen* and *Plotinus* among the rest, have been let into the Secret, and grew so fond of it, that † *Origen*, willing to support his Opinion by something very solid, catches at the Authority of an Apocryphal Book ascrib'd to the Patriarch *Joseph*, where the Patriarch *Jacob* is brought in speaking to his twelve Sons, || *I have read in the Registers of Heaven, what shall happen to you and to your Children.* But Comets were the chief Staple, and which turn'd to most account. Complying with the Impressions of Fear, which the strangeness and excessive length of these Stars made upon Mankind, the Astrologers stuck not to say they were mischievous Stars; they said it much the more, when they found they made themselves in some degree necessary by this means, every one seeking to 'em with great impatience to know, as from the Mouth of an Oracle, what particular Disasters such a Comet portended. Eclipses furnish'd more occasions for exercising their Talent. From this worthy Precedent of Judicial Astrology others took the Hint, and invented other new

† Euseb. Præp. Evang. l. 6. c. 9. || Legi in tabulis cœli quæcunque contingent vobis & Filiis vestris.

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ways of Divination, by Geomancy, Chiromancy, Onomancy, &c. till the World by degrees was so overrun with Superstition, that the least Trifle was a Presage; especially when this kind of Knowledge became the Business of Religion, and the Substance of Divine Worship consisted in the Ordinances of Augurs. These, who to make themselves necessary in the World, were oblig'd to keep up and quicken mens Apprehensions of the Wrath of God, took special care to cultivate Comets, and bring it into a Proverb, *So many Comets, so many Calamity's*. They knew, as *Livy* expresses it, 'twas best fishing in troubled Waters: for speaking of a contagious Distemper, which from the Country Villages spread into the City, occasion'd by an extraordinary Drought in the Year of *Rome* 326. he observes how at last it infected the * Mind, by the management of those who liv'd on the Superstition of the People; so that nothing was to be seen except some new-fangled Ceremony or other in every Corner. The Devil, who had a hopeful Game on't, and saw Superstition the surest way to get himself worship'd under the Name of the *False Gods*, in a hundred various ways all criminal and abominable in the sight of the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, ne'er fail'd on the appearance of any rare Meteor, or uncommon Star, to exert his imposing Arts, and make Idolaters believe, they were the Signs of Divine Wrath, and that they were all undone,

* Nec corpora modo affecta tabo, sed animos quoque multiplex religio, & pleraque externa invasit, novos ritus sacrificando, vaticinandoque, inferentibus in domos, quibus quæstui sunt capti superstitione animi. *L. 4. dec. 1.*

unless they appeas'd their Gods by Sacrifices of Men and brute Beasts.

SECT. LXXXI. *That Politicians have promoted the Superstition of Presages.*

POLITICIANS have also lent a helping hand to give Presages a Reputation, as being a pretty Project, either to intimidate the People, or raise their drooping Spirits. Had the *Roman* Soldiers been *free Thinkers*, *Drusus* the Son of *Tiberius* had ne'er been so fortunate to quell a desperate Mutiny among the Legions of *Pannonia*, who utterly refus'd to obey his Commands; but an Eclipse, which critically interven'd, broke their refractory Spirits to such a degree, that † *Drusus* who manag'd the pannick Fear with great dexterity, did what he wou'd with 'em. An Eclipse of the Moon put *Alexander* the Great's Army into such a Consternation, some days before the Battel of *Arbela*, that the Men, persuaded Heaven was against 'em, were very unwilling to march. Their Devotion turning to downright Disobedience, *Alexander* commanded the *Egyptian* Astrologers, who were the deepest vers'd in the Mystery of the Stars, to give their Opinion of this Eclipse in the presence of all the Officers of his Army. They, without going about the Bush to explain the Physical Cause, which 'twas their Interest carefully to conceal from the People, declar'd, The Sun was on the side of the *Grecians*, and the Moon for the *Persians*; and that this Planet was never in an Eclipse, but it threatned 'em with

† Tacit. Annal. lib. 1.

some mighty Disaster: of this they brought several antient Examples among the Kings of *Persia*, who after an Eclipse had always found their Gods averse in the day of Battel. Nothing, continues *Q. Curtius*, || is so effectual as Superstition for keeping the *Vulgar* under. Be they ever so unruly and inconstant, if once their Minds are possess'd with the vain Visions of Religion, they are all Obedience to the Soothsayer, whatever becomes of the General. The Egyptian *Astrologers* Answer being given thro the Army, restor'd their Confidence and their Courage, &c. The same *Alexander*, † just before his passing the River *Granicus*, observing the Circumstance of Time, which was the Month *Desius* reckon'd unfortunate to the *Macedonians* from all Antiquity, made the Men thoughtful, immediately order'd this dangerous Month to be call'd by the Name of the foregoing Month, well knowing what a Power the vain Scruples of Religion have over little Minds, and over ignorant Minds. He sent private Orders to *Aristander* his chief Soothsayer, just offering Sacrifice for a happy Passage, to write on the Liver of the Victim with a Liquor prepar'd for that purpose, *That the Gods had granted the Victory to Alexander*. The notice of this Miracle fill'd the Men with invincible Ardor, and they cry'd out, one and all, The Day was their own, since the Gods vouchsaf'd 'em such plain Demonstrations of their Favor. The History of this mighty Conqueror affords more such Examples of Artifice, tho he always affected to conquer by mere dint of Bravery. But

|| Lib. 4. cap. 10. † See the Supplements of Freinshemius on *Q. Curtius*, l. 2. ch. 5.

what is stranger still, this very Hero, who palm'd so often upon others, was caught himself in his turn, and was exceeding superstitious by fits. I say nothing of *Themistocles* *, who in the War between *Xerxes* and the *Athenians*, despairing to prevail on his Countrymen by force of Reason to quit their City, and betake themselves to Sea, set all the Engines of Religion at work, forg'd Oracles, and got the Priests to tell out among the People, That *Minerva* was fled from *Athens*, and took the way which led to the Port. *Philip* of *Macedon*, whose Talent lay in conquering his Enemys, by good Intelligence purchas'd at any price, had as many Oracles at Command as he wanted: And hence *Demosthenes* justly suspecting too good an understanding between *Philip* and the *Delphian* Priestesses, railly'd her with so much sharpness upon her partiality to that Prince, as *Minutius Felix* takes notice after *Cicero*.

'Tis very obvious how the same Reasons of State which kept up the popular Superstition for other Prodigys, shou'd take care to encourage it with regard to Comets. Nothing was easier, when a Comet appear'd, and the State design'd to make War on any of their Neighbours, than to make the Astrologers give out such a Comet threaten'd such a Prince in particular; than to make others say in a grave Air, what perhaps *Vespasian* † said in a way of pleasantry on a Comet which appear'd in his Reign; 'Twas the King of Persia with his long Locks who was threaten'd, and not he who always wore his Hair cut close to his Ears. This in the mean time was keeping his own Party in

* Plutarch in his Life. † Xephilin. Aurel. Victor in Epit.
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good Humor, and putting ugly Thoughts into his Enemies Heads. By the 6th Satyr of Juvenal, we find this the common practice of his Time: For giving the Character of a Female Newsmonger, he introduces her telling in all Companies, *That truly she was the first who saw the Comet; that it threatned the Kings of Armenia and Persia; and Accounts were just arriv'd of the Citys and Country of Persia being all destroy'd by Earthquake and Inundation:* which passed you know for a disastrous Prefage, over and above the present Damage.

*Instantem regi Armenio Parthoque Cometen
Prima videt, Famam rumoresque illa recentes
Excipit ad portas, quosdam facit isse Niphatem
In populos, magnoque illic cuncta arva teneri
Diluvio, nutare urbes, subsidere terras,
Quocunque in trivio, cuicunque est obvia narrat.*

Here you see the true Spirit of a bigotted Newsmonger, always exaggerating the Miserys of an Enemy's Country, and the sad Prefages foreboding its Ruin, Who doubts that *Cesar's* Friends took advantage of the Comet appearing soon after his Death, to say, 'twas a Mark of the Wrath of Heaven against his Murderers, and a Pledg of the Divine Protection over those who shou'd pursue his Revenge? I suppose you have read how *Mahomet* suborn'd an Astrologer of Fame to say, There should soon be great Alterations in the World, and a mighty Prophet establish a new Religion. To what End? To prepare mens Minds for giving way to Events, which they look'd on as foreordain'd and unavoidable. But if Statesmen have contributed to make Comets pass for ill Prefages,

sages, the People have not been backward on their part, not only as strongly inclin'd to fancy Presage in every trifle, but as there runs a Spirit of ill nature thro the Populace, disposing 'em to believe on the least miscarriage, that those at the Helm don't discharge their Trust to the good liking of Almighty God; and hereupon find fault with their going on this Scheme, and their not going on that. So that Politicians have sometimes met with untoward Rubs from the Peoples Prejudices this way, who are come at last to believe, that Comets threaten only Kings and Great Men.

SECT. LXXXII. *That Panegyrist have done their part to promote the Superstition of Presages.*

TO all these Causes of the general Prejudice, we are to add the Flatterys of Poets and Orators. When these Gentlemen are to form their Hero's Elogy, they run upon this among other common-places, *That all Nature adores him; That she exerts her utmost Powers to serve him; That she mourns at his Misfortunes, promises him long before-hand to the World; And when the World by its Sins is unworthy to possess him longer, Heaven, which calls him home, hangs out new Lights, &c.* With this Hyperbole Mr. Balzac regal'd Cardinal Richelieu; adding, *That to form such a Minister, Universal Nature's on the stretch: God gives him first by Promise, and makes him the Expectation of Ages.* For this the Criticks attack'd him, but he * de-

* Mr. Balzac's 2d Discourse to Card. Bentivogli.

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fended himself; alledging, other Panegyrist's had gone some Notes higher: He, for example, among the Antients, who said of certain great Souls, *That all the Orders of Heaven were call'd together to fancy a fine Destiny for 'em*: And that Illustrious Italian of the last Age, who writes, *The Eternal Mind was wrapt in deep Contemplation, and big with the vast Design, when it conceiv'd such a Genius as Cardinal Hippolito d'Este*. I wonder he cou'd not think of one Example more to bear him out; the Priest I mean, who told the Emperor *Constantine*, *That Divine Providence, not content with qualifying him for the Empire of the World, had form'd Vertues in his Soul, which shou'd entitle him to reign in Heaven with his only Son*. Probably the bad success of this profane Flattery oblig'd Mr. *Balzac* to pass this Example by; for *Eusebius* informs us, that *Constantine* bid the idle Haranguer give over.

This we may in general affirm, That Flatterers have always laid hold of the most surprizing natural Effects to enhance their Hero's Glory, and make their court to Great Men. Thus the Poets of *Augustus's* time vy'd in persuading the World, that the Murder of *Julius Caesar* was the Cause of all the Prodigys which follow'd: *Horace*, for Example, in that Ode I cited before, to prove the Overflowings of Rivers were reckon'd among bad Presages; there he pretends, *Tiber* had not committed all those Ravages, only in complaisance to his Wife *Ilia*, bent on revenging the Murder of her Kinsman *Caesar*; and that all the other Calamitys which afflicted or threatned the *Roman Empire*, were the Consequences of his Assassination.

tion. If you'll take *Virgil's* * word, the Sun was so troubled at the Death of *Cesar*, that he went into deep Mourning; and so obscur'd his Beams, that the World was afraid they shou'd ne'er see him more. In the mean time, no sooner was the Comet observ'd which follow'd this Murder, than another Set of Flatterers pretended 'twas *Julius's* Soul receiv'd into the Order of the Gods, dedicated a † Temple to the Comet, and set up the Image of *Cesar* with a Star in his Forehead.

Plainer Contradictions can't well be fram'd: For if the Soul of *Cesar* was receiv'd among the Gods, and sparkled in the Heavens amidst the other Stars; why shou'd the Sun take on so? Why hide his Face in Vails of Darknes? Why not take part in the Honors done Heaven by such a Guest, he who was a Native of the Place, rather than in the Misfortunes of *Rome*? *Virgil* sure was singular in making his Court; while all the rest agreed, that Heaven was highly honor'd by the Accession of *Cesar's* Star, to assert the Sun was just then unusually overcast. Had he been a Man of less good sense, he had struck in with the common Conceit, and said, the Sun concern'd to see the new Star have more Respect than himself, hid his Face for shame. But this Poet had too much Judgment to make a Compliment; which, with Mr. *Voiture's* leave, and with his Song's good leave upon the Lady bathing at Sun-set, might possibly seem insipid to the Man whose Palat was to be pleas'd: And one of the || Wits of his Court observes, he was like some metal'd

* Georg. l. 1. † Sueton. in vita Cæsaris. || Cui malè si
palpere, recalcitrat undique tutus. *Hor. Sat. 1. l. 2.*

Horses

Horses which lash if one comes up awkwardly to their Heads. What shall we say then to *Ovid*, who ending his *Metamorphoses* by that of *Cesar* into a Comet, runs counter to all the rest, and assures us, among the Prodigys which preceded *Cesar's* Death, the Sun was observ'd to look unusually pale, and the Moon ting'd with Blood?

Here Sir's a Master-Key to all their Meanings: These Wits had only one drift, To make their Court to *Augustus*, tho it cost 'em sacred Incense. For *Cesar's* part, who was not in a condition now to return their Compliments; he had not, 'tis probable, inspir'd their Muses, but for his good Fortune in having a Successor extremely passionate for his Glory. So they deify'd *Julius* for his Successor's sake. Now whether one says the Sun was darkned a little before his Death, or a little after, 'tis much at one for the deceas'd Prince's Glory. And here's the reason *Virgil* tells the Story one way, and *Ovid* another; and both conclude with *Augustus's* own Praises, very exquisitely turn'd, and carry'd as far as good Sense will allow.

SECT. LXXXIII. To how many Purposes the same Comet has serv'd.

BY this we see the same Comet has answer'd several different Ends. *Augustus*, for Reasons of State, was pleas'd the People believ'd 'twas *Julius's* Soul. The firm Persuasion of their prosecuting the Murderers of a Person now among the Gods, was a mighty support to his Cause. This was the reason of his building a * Temple to the

* *Plin.* 1. 2. cap. 28.

Comet, and openly professing he accounted it an auspicious Presage. They who were zealous in his Interest, but cou'd not bring themselves to believe this Conversion of Souls into Stars, believ'd, at least made others believe, it denounc'd the Wrath of Heaven against *Brutus* and *Cassius*. They who were still Republicans at heart, had other thoughts, and said it imported how highly the Gods disapprov'd the People's abandoning the Deliverers of their Country: For this Party, no doubt, made their use of the Comet, according to the Superstition of the Times. In a word, the Poets had plenty of pompous Description from it, and a handle not only for interesting the whole Frame of Nature in the departed Hero's Glory, but for incensing the living Hero too, which was the Pith of the business.

I don't speak on bare conjecture. If you look into that passage of *Virgil* hinted at before, you'll find it end with this Prayer, *That at least it wou'd please th' immortal Gods, who twice had the heart to see the Pharfalian Plains swim in Roman Blood, not to envy Augustus's retrieving that Empire, which they suffer'd to decay; That Heaven had too long repin'd at the Happiness of Rome in enjoying Augustus, and murmur'd at his triumphing only on Earth.* Look at the last Chapter of *Ovid's* *Metamorphosis*; there you'll see *Cesar's* Exaltation as much owing to the Merits of his Successor, as his own. But to spare you the trouble of finding out all these places, I'll present you with one of the most exquisite delicacy. He's speaking of *Cesar's* Soul:

————— *Simul evolat altius illa,
Flammiferumque trahens spatioso limite crinem*
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* De
Cass. l. 4

*Stella micat : Natique videns benefacta, fatetur
Esse suis majora, & vinci gaudet ab illo.*

*Hic sua præferri quanquam vetat acta paternis,
Libera fama tamen, nullisque obnoxia jussis,
Invitum præfert, unâque in parte repugnat.*

But for fear of tiring you with Citations, I cou'd bring another Instance from the Flatterys study'd for the Emperor *Adrian*, inconsolable on the Death of his Favorite *Antinous*, whose Soul they assur'd him was chang'd into a new Star, which appear'd at that time. I might cite * *Claudian*, who draws a happy Prefage for the Emperor *Honorius*, from a Star's being seen by day-light about the hour of his Birth. I might add, that the two wonderful † Comets, which appear'd one at the Birth, the other in the first Year of the Reign of *Mithridates*, were said to be Prefages of his future Greatness. I might take notice how the Augurs, consulted upon the *Tiber*'s swelling the night after *Octavius* had accepted the Title of *Augustus*, declar'd || it the Omen of his exceeding Elevation. Which shews the Poets were not the only Persons who made Nature pimp to the Passions of Great Men. I cou'd bring a hundred Instances more to shew, that a design of pleasing, of soothing, of giving an Air of Marvelous, has put Men on interpreting Effects purely natural to extraordinary meanings. Did a King or Queen drop off soon after the appearance of a Comet? Nature, say they, foreboding this deep Disaster, set all its Springs at work to put forth this fearful blazing

* De Consul. Honorii.
Cass. l. 53.

† Justin. Histor. l. 37.

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Star: And by often saying so, People were insensibly brought to believe, the next time a Comet appear'd, Nature had some such dismal forebodings. Did a Comet appear at the Birth of a Prince, who prov'd powerful and victorious? The Panegyrists casting about by the Rules of their Rhetorick, for the Signs *Antecedent* and *Concomitant* of this Birth, to be sure made the new Star ring loud enough. In short, 'twas impossible the Comet shou'd pass for what it was, that is, a mere natural Effect, so many different Parties combin'd to vote it a Miracle.

The more we study the Heart of Man, the more we perceive Pride's his predominant Passion; and that he's grasping at Greatness in the lowest Ebb of Being. Frail inconsiderable Wretch! to fancy he can't fetch his last Breath without reversing the Laws of Nature, and putting Heaven to the charge of new Blazes to distinguish his Funeral Pomp! Senseless ridiculous Vanity! Did we form just Ideas of the Universe, we might easily conceive the Death or Birth of a Prince is so small a thing, compar'd with the Nature of Things at large, that Heaven's keeping such a stir with him wou'd never answer. We may say with the *Roman* Philosopher, who had the sublimest Reflexions of any *Roman*, * That the Cares of Providence do indeed descend to us, and that we come in for a part, yet their End is somewhat more than our Conservation; And tho the Motions of the Heavens are very available to us, we must not imagine these vast Bodys turn round in the Service of the Earth. Forgive my relishing

* Senec. de Benef. l. 6. c. 23. Id. de Ira l. 2. c. 27.

this Thought a little, which I know will never pass for Orthodox with those who take Comets for Prodigys. So many have agreed to dub 'em with this Quality, that the Error's become incorrigible.

Add to this, that the Course of the World affording almost infinite Examples of Revolution and Disaster, we must often meet with some at the heels of Comets: That the Number of remarkable Calamitys exceeds that of great and signal Blessings: That Mankind naturally remembers an evil, longer than a good Turn: That with regard to Predictions, Men are more deluded by one hapning right, than undeceiv'd by twenty notoriously false; and therefore mark those Comets more, which have been follow'd by great Calamitys, than those which have not: That more Kings and Princes go off, than make such a figure as *Mithridates*. Add these, I say, to all my former Reflexions, and you'll easily perceive, Sir, 'twas natural for the Pagans to be under this general Prejudice, That Comets are the Presages of Evil.

SECT. LXXXIV. *How Christians come to be under the same Prejudices as the Heathens with regard to Comets.*

AND now we must not think it strange, that Christians shou'd be under the same Prejudice, seeing they are the Posterity of these Pagans, and, bating the single Point of Idolatry, subject to as many Follies and Failings as they. The great design of the Apostles preaching was to make known the only true God, and his Son JESUS

CHRIST God-Man, who dy'd and rose again for our Justification; to inflame Men with the Love of God and his Holiness, to abolish the Worship of Idols, and destroy the Dominion of Sin. This was all the Publication of the Gospel aim'd at: For it appears not that God, by *calling Men out of Darknefs into his marvelous Light*, to use the Scripture expression, design'd to make 'em better Philosophers than before, to explain the Works of Nature, or fortify 'em against Prejudice and Popular Error, so as to be impeccable in this respect; Experience shews the contrary. We don't find those to whom God dispenses the greatest Riches of his Grace, whom he fills with the firmest Faith, and most inflam'd Charity, always the most penetrating Genius's, reason with most Conviction, or surmount a thousand false Notions, of no consequence indeed with respect to Salvation. So that one may say the Pagans went over to the Christian Religion with all their Pagan Prejudices in relation to Natural Subjects, and generally speaking in relation to every thing, not directly clashing with the Truths of Religion.

You are too knowing, Sir, to need making this Remark, and might be sufficiently inform'd in this Point, had you never read more than Mr. *Nicoles's* Works: Hear what he says in that Master-piece he calls only *Essays of Morality*, out of a perfectly Christian Modesty; * " Altho
" JESUS CHRIST was full of all Truth, as
" St. *John* expresses it, yet it do's not appear he

* *Traite* 1. Vol. 1. Part 1. n. 42.

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“ endeavor'd to deliver Men from any other
 “ Errors than what concern'd God and the
 “ means of their Salvation. He knew all their
 “ mistakes about Natural Subjects. He knew
 “ wherein true Eloquence consisted. The Truth
 “ of all past Events was perfectly known to
 “ him; yet he gave no Command to his Apostles
 “ to concern themselves with mens Errors in
 “ Natural Philosophy, or give 'em Rules of per-
 “ fect Oratory, or inform 'em of the Truth of in-
 “ finite Facts which History has misrepresented.

It appears from the Writings of the Fathers, who were converted from Paganism, that if they were bred *Platonists*, they retain'd the Spirit and Air of their Sect. There's no room to doubt then that they who believ'd Eclipses, Comets, Earthquakes, &c. Phenomena of evil Presage, went on in the same Belief; supposing, that provided they imputed to their Sins, and to the Anger of the True God, what they formerly ascrib'd to the False Gods, or the neglect of a superstitious Rite, nothing was to be said against it. Thus the Body of the Faithful have been tinctur'd from Age to Age, with Errors deriv'd from Paganism, except only in Points which manifestly overthrow the Mysterys of Religion. For so long as People saw an Opinion not condemn'd as Heretical, they went without more ceremony with the stream of those prepossess. * Very few make it their business to examine whether common Opinions be true or false; Isn't it enough, say they, our Fathers believ'd it?

* Fieri malunt alieni erroris accessio quam sibi credere.
Minutius Felix.

SECT. LXXXV. *The introducing several Pagan Ceremonys into Christianity.*

'T IS even true, that when the great Simplicity of the Worship deliver'd by the Apostles, was in the Primitive Church perceiv'd not so proper for times in which the Fervor of Christian Zeal did somewhat abate, and 'twas therefore thought prudent to introduce the Usage of divers Ceremonys into Divine Service, they pitcht chiefly on those most in vogue among the Pagans; either because they thought 'em fittest to inspire a Reverence for Holy things, or the best means of making Christianity familiar to Infidels, and winning 'em over to JESUS CHRIST by a Change in some respects imperceptible. When the *Hugonots* reproach us with the Conformity between our Ceremonys and those of antient Paganism, and prove it upon us by good Authoritys; many of our Controvertists tell 'em plainly, 'tis a Lie, and that these are Calumnys devis'd maliciously by the Ministers to defame our Religion. But others more learned, and more sincere, own * the Debt, and are at no loss for Reasons to justify our adopting several Usages of Paganism: They alledg 'tis employing the Spoils of *Egypt* to adorn the *Jewish* Tabernacle; 'tis following the Example of *Solomon*, who borrow'd the Materials and Builders of the Temple of the true God from an idolatrous King; that *David* scrupl'd not to set the Crown of Gold on his own Head, which he tore from that of the

* *Memoirs de Monf. Marolles, part, 2, pag. 209. Du Boulay Theatre des antiquitez Romaines, pag. 581—587, &c.*



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Idol *Melchom*; that God allow'd the *Jews* to marry their Captives, and change the Daughters of *Moab* into Daughters of *Israel*, provided they par'd their Nails, and shav'd their Heads, and pass'd other requisite Purifications: That likewise after the necessary Defalcations and Purifications, we need make no difficulty of fitting our selves with the Spoils of Paganism, as *St. Jerom* remarks. Cardinal *Baronius* confesses the Church has often borrow'd 'em; for having frankly own'd the Feast of *Candlemas* intirely Pagan in its original, he adds, * *The like has often hapned, several other Gentile Superstitions being laudably introduc'd into the Church, and expiated and sanctify'd by the Christian Usage.* Judg then, Sir, whether the Errors and Prejudices of the Pagans, with relation to Presages, might not well have crept into the Christian Religion, provided they ascrib'd no part to the false Gods, since the very Ceremonys of the Pagan Religion were laudably introduc'd after the requisite Purgation.

SECT. LXXXVI. *That the false Converts from Paganism brought over many Errors into Christianity.*

ONE thing more which mightily conduc'd to the transplanting Prejudices from Paganism to Christianity, is the great Number of the first false Converts. How many Pagans do you think,

* *Idem in multis aliis Gentilium institutis contigit, ut Superstitionis eorum usus sacris ritibus expiatus, ac sacrosanctus redditus, in Dei Ecclesiam laudabiliter introductus sit. Not. in Martyrol. Rom. 2. Februar.*

Sir,

Sir, might pretend to abjure Idolatry under the *Constantine's* and *Theodosius's*, when the Christian was the reigning Religion, and Baptism one sure way of making their Court? Perhaps not many while the Christian Emperors were oblig'd to keep fair with the Pagans; but I'm much mistaken, after *Theodosius* set himself in earnest to extirpate Paganism, if Numbers went not over into the Bosom of the Church on no other motive, than being of the Prince's Religion. I say the same of the Pagan *Franks* on *Clouis's* Conversion to the Faith. 'Tis probable God enlighten'd some even of this sort, and that his Providence, which sometimes makes use of Mens Passions for turning 'em from the Error of their ways, employ'd the powerful Impression which the Example of a great King makes on his Subjects Minds, to the effectual opening of some of his Courtiers Eyes. But 'tis more than probable, that Numbers got themselves baptiz'd merely to be of the uppermost side. If those Heathen Philosophers, who heard *Constantine* the Great's Discourse to the *Nicene* Fathers in defence of CHRIST's Divinity, were more affected by it than by all the learned Apologys they had read before: If the Christian Religion never seem'd so plausible, as when an Emperor cloth'd in all the Robes of Majesty appear'd its Advocate: Is it not natural, that the Presence of a great King embracing the Christian Religion, and the Force of such an Example, shou'd determine most of his Court to believe as he did, without examining farther? One may say too, in these Days of Prosperity, the Examples of some sery'd to influence others from Province to Province; and consequently a great many of all

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Ranks and Conditions became Members of the Christian Church, and brought over their Prejudices with 'em.

SECT. LXXXVII. *Of Peoples Inclination for the prevailing Religion, and the Injury this does the true Church.*

MEZERAY * relates a Passage of *Catherine de Medicis*, which I take to be considerable. The King's Army being forc'd to give ground in the beginning of the Battel of *Dreux*, some Runaways spur'd to *Paris*, and gave out all was lost. Well, says *Catherine de Medicis*, without the least Emotion, *We must e'en say our Prayers in French*; and began to smile upon the Prince of *Conde's* Friends, and the Favorers of the new Religion. It looks as if she were perfectly resign'd, and ready to sacrifice the Catholick Religion to the new, if this last had got the day. That Covy of Maids of Honor she always kept, to make her a Party at the expence of you know what, had been as flexible as she, and pray'd as devoutly in *French*, wou'd the Prince of *Conde* have help'd 'em to rich *Hugonot* Husbands; and so on each in his Station, from the Queen Mother down, had struck in with the Religion in mode, either to get or to keep his Employment. So that it's owing to the Fortune of one Battel, that the establish'd Religion was not the Religion tolerated and in disgrace, and that People did not quit it in Shoals to get into the Road of Preferment. The case was much the same thirty Years after, had *Harry IV.* been strong e-

* *Abregé Chronol. Ann. 1562.*

nough to crush the League: Had this hapned, I dare answer there had been no Conference of *Suriennes*, no Promise of getting himself instructed: A victorious Monarch had bin under no scruples about the Truth of his Religion; he had fixt it on the Throne, and happy wou'd it be for the Catholicks might they obtain an Edict of *Nants*, and come in for a bare Toleration. The Conquerors had treated 'em with a word and a blow; and because the *Hugonots* of that Age had many of those flaming Zealots who compass Sea and Land to make one Profelyte, as we have many such at present, by the Grace of God and the King, all the Discourse had been of Conversions. The Intendants of every Province might have been so many *Marillacs*; and Lord knows, dear Sir, what you and I had been at this Day: I am apt to think Monsieur, your Grandfather, who had a good Employment and a great many Children, wou'd have turn'd *Hugonot* to secure his Place, and provide for his Family: So it's ten to one you had been a Minister of *Paris* at this hour; for Monsieur your Father, observing your fine Genius for Books, and devout Disposition, had certainly dedicated you to the Church. As for my Ancestors, I verily believe they had done just as I see the *Hugonots* of our Neighborhood do at this Day, who, to be deliver'd once for all from the pious Persecutions of Monks and Curates, and to reap all the Advantages of Heaven and Earth which they throw 'em in, quit of all the Outrage and Injustice often done 'em out of a too intemperate Zeal (what I wou'd not say to every one) pretend to turn Catholicks.

Now it's certain, these pretended Conversions of our Ancestors had not bar'd their Devotions
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in private for our Lady, for the Saints, for Relicks, for Images, for the Scapulary; nor wrested that pious Credulity from their Hearts they were inspir'd with in the Cradle, for Miracles, Purgatory, &c. Still there had been a Tincture on't in you and I, and all of us, how stiff Calvinists soever in outward Appearance. This shews that where a Person takes up a Religion only for Politick Ends, he takes it with all his old Prejudices; and many a Pagan did the same when he embrac'd Christianity.

SECT. LXXXVIII. *Reflections on the present Conversions of the Hugonots.*

I'M glad I am fallen on this Subject, because it gives me an Opportunity of asking your Opinion of the many Conquests we daily gain over the pretended Reform'd Religion. I know you're a hearty Catholick, and know very few others whose Zeal comes up to your pitch. So that I'm sometimes apt to think you so transported with our daily Victories, that you have not time to reflect on the Circumstances or Consequences of 'em: Sometimes, as I know, your Zeal does not blind your Judgment; I'm inclin'd to believe you have clearer Views of this matter than most others. However, not seeing to the bottom of your Thoughts, I must desire you to tell me your Opinion freely. If you stand upon my leading the way to a *Confidance* of this kind, and breaking the Ice before you, 'tis soon done; for here Sir's my Opinion in short.

I cou'd never think, that wresting Conversions by Prospects of worldly Advantage, or on pain of sub-

submitting to the hardest Fate, was agreeable to the Spirit of the Gospel. I own in the present Disposition of the *Calvinists* of *France*, these are fit Methods for working in 'em an outward Change, because they have spent their first Fire, and that Ardor which attends all great Revolutions, and which flam'd so high in the Spirits of the first Reformers. But sincerely, Sir, I can't think it the way to make 'em sound Catholicks, which yet is the only Point we shou'd labor: For we have so many ill People and profligate Wretches among us already, that instead of increasing the Number by shoals of false Converts, and Socinian Ministers who come over daily, we shou'd rather pray that God wou'd purge his Church of all those who dishonor it by an ungodly Conversation.

You'l tell me, the Intention of those employ'd in the extirpation of Calvinism, is not to increase the Numbers of ill Men among us. I believe it, Sir: but you know what we say in the Schools of those who drink hard, and yet profess they have no intention to be drunk; That altho they have *Formally* no such Intention, they have *Interpretatively*; that's to say, they have an Intention, which might reasonably be interpreted an Intention of getting drunk. Apply this to our Convertists, they have not *formally* an intention of making *Hugonots* bad Catholicks; but *interpretatively* they have, because they use all the means directly leading to false Conversions. They intend no *Hugonot* shall be worth a Groat who persists in his Religion; they intend he shall lose his Places and Employments, be expos'd to a thousand Insults, not go to Sermons without infinite Hazards and Inconvenience. They offer

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offer him a thousand fine things to abjure his Religion; they ease him of a heavy Yoke; they smoothe his way to Honors and Preferments. One must be a great stranger to Human Nature, not to know there's a world of Men in this Age, who who wou'd on these Terms make profession of what you please.

As we have two sorts of Apostles imploy'd in the Work of Conversion; those of the Long Robe, and those of the Short; I can't think the Conduct of both equally blameable. Those of the long Robe appear much less excusable, as well because they are the Men who inspire the King with all these Methods of Conversion, as because they find these Methods expressly condemn'd in Ecclesiastical History: Whereas the Apostles of the short Robe only execute the King's Orders, and are not of a Profession which obliges 'em to know the Sense of the Fathers. Give me leave to cite one Passage from *Socrates*, which shews these ways of converting were disapprov'd by the Primitive Christians, and oblig'd Multitudes to abjure the Faith. I'm sensible you're well acquainted with this Passage; but perhaps you little imagine I am, I'll therefore do my self a small piece of Honor with you: And here's what *Socrates* * says, *As for the Methods of extreme Cruelty, such as were practis'd under Dioclesian; the Emperor Julian did not think fit to pursue 'em, † yet he did not therefore forbear persecuting the Church* (mark these words) FOR I CALL IT PERSECUTION WHEN PEOPLE WHO CARRY THEMSELVES QUIETLY IN

* Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 12, 13. † Οὐ μὴν πάντῃ τῷ διώκειν ἀπέ-
στηλτο, διωγμὸν δὲ λέγω τὸ ὁπωσὺν ταράττειν τοὺς ἡσυχάζοντας.

THE STATE, ARE DISQUIETED IN ANY RESPECT. Now he gave the Christians much disquiet; He made a Law forbidding 'em the study of human Learning, for fear, says he, they shou'd be the better able to answer the Philosophers. He rendred 'em incapable of the Government of Provinces, and all Military Impleys: And partly by Wheedle, partly by Liberality, he drew over Numbers to the Worship of false Gods. In those days one might have seen, as in the Refiner's Furnace, who were the true Christians, and who the false: The true Christians parted cheerfully with all, ready to suffer all rather than renounce the Faith: But they, who far from being Christians indeed, prefer'd the Riches and Honors of this World to real Felicities, boggled not at sacrificing to Idols. And here he mentions one Ecebolius a Sophist, the exact Counterpart of many in our days: He was always of the Emperor's Religion: Under the Reign of Constantius he pretended an extraordinary Zeal for the Gospel: Under Julian he was a great Patron of the Pagan Superstitions: After the Death of Julian, Christianity remounting the Throne, the Sophist return'd to his Christian Profession. In a word, Socrates informs us, the Christians under this Apostate Emperor were forc'd to pay immense Sums, to be exempted from sacrificing to Idols.

There's no honest Man who must not condemn these Methods of Conversion. And had the Gods of Julian been reasonable Gods, they had detested those Christians who offer'd 'em Sacrifice only to be eas'd of an extraordinary Tax. What regard then can Almighty God have for so many *Hugonots* as change their Religion for Bread; the Living God, I say, who is infinitely worthy to be worship'd for his own sake?

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I'm sure, Sir, you little imagine I am well enough acquainted with Church-History, to know one *Asterius* a Greek Bishop, who liv'd towards the latter end of the Fourth Century: And yet I remember the Name, and have read over his Homily against Avarice, where I mark'd a Passage which may stand conveniently in this place: *What is it, says he, has oblig'd Christians to give themselves over to the Worship of Idols? Is it not the love of Riches? Is it not the Hopes and Assurance the Wicked give 'em of enjoying the good Things of this Life, which tempts these Wretches to change their Religion with as little Ceremony as they change their Clothes? We have several such Examples in the History of former Times; and we have seen many more as deplorable in our own. For when the Emperor Julian, throwing off the Mask, and openly professing what he had so long dissembled, offer'd Sacrifice to the Gods of the Heathens, and invited others by various Recompences to do the same; how many were found who deserted the true Church, to go over to the Communion of Idolaters? How many, who, inveigled by divers Allurements, swallow'd the Bait?*

No doubt the Gentiles made much the same Complaint, when Christian Emperors lur'd over Idolaters to the Christian Religion. And questionless they had ground to suspect, that Numbers quitted 'em in complaisance to the Prince: For, as I have observ'd, in the Reigns of the *Constantine's*, *Theodosius's*, and *Clouis*, all those Pagans who design'd to make their Court effectually, or had no remains of Conscience, or who were of opinion a Man might serve God acceptably in any way, flung themselves into the thriving Religion. God only knows how much ill-will the Gospel

owes 'em, and what a prejudice the Truth has suffer'd by their means. These false Converts have been a bitter Root of Superstition and Error in the Church, which perhaps she's chewing upon to this day. The contrary is what may justly be apprehended from the false Converts of the present Age, that they'l be a running Seed of Incredulity, which may sap our Foundation by degrees, and cause a contempt of the Devotions most in vogue. Now if we give way to the least Change, what will become of the main Foundation of our Faith, which subsists in a Supposition of the *Infallibility*, and by consequence Immutability in the Church? Don't put me off by saying, That shou'd the new Catholicks by degrees introduce an Abolition of certain ways of Worship, yet the Decisions of Councils stand good above the reach of Malice. *Monsieur de Meaux* may say as he thinks fit, but it's plain we have no Salvo for the *Infallibility*, if once we give up to the Protestants those Devotions which shock'd 'em. Perhaps I may have occasion to discourse more largely on this Subject, I won't go a step out of my way to find one; but if it freely presents, I promise you I'l not let it slip.

When I think of the Remark of some Learned * Rabbi's, That the Idolaters who follow'd the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, under the notion of Proselytes, were the first who mov'd for making the golden Calf, and the Fomenters of all the Murmurs in the Wilderness; I tremble for the Catholick Church, foreseeing these new Converts may one day cause endless murmurings at several

* See *Ja. Windet de vita functionum statu*, p. 256.

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things, which will look the more shocking in their Eyes, the nearer they're suffer'd to examine 'em. God's over all. Many wise Men * are of opinion, that the prodigious number of Sects among the *Turks*, springs from the various Religions of the first Converts to Mahometism, drawn in at first either by Interest or Violence: The *Greeks*, who were of a Country once the Mother of Arts and Sciences, having mingled the antient Tenets of their Schools with the Dreams of the Alcoran, which wou'd not pass with that People: The *Russians*, the *Muscovites*, the *Circassians*, and several other Nations, borrowing likewise each from their own Stock; which has multiply'd the Sects of Mahometism *in infinitum*. The Rabbi's Remark is indeed agreeable to the Scriptures, which say in two several Places, That a mix'd Multitude follow'd the Children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*; And that these were they who fomented the Peoples Murmurings. But this being somewhat foreign, let's return.

SECT. LXXXIX. *The transplanting of Errors from Paganism to Christianity, prov'd true in Fact.*

IF these Remarks ben't sufficient to prove the Pagans retain'd several Errors when they imbrac'd Christianity, I'm ready to give one Proof more to which there's no Exception, because founded on incontestable Fact.

'Tis evident from the Sermons of the antient Fathers, that the Christians of their Times be-

* *Sir P. Rycart, l. 2. & 12.*

liev'd they gave great Relief to the Moon in an Eclipse, by raising hideous Outcrys to the Skys; That this brought her out of her Deliquium, in which she must inevitably have expir'd, if deny'd the Benefit of their Crys. * *St. Ambrose*, the Author of the 215th Sermon *de Tempore*, bound up with those of *St. Austin*, and *St. Eloy* Bishop of *Noyon*, declaim particularly against this Abuse; an Argument it reign'd among those to whom they preach'd. It appears also from the Homily of *St. Chrysostom*, from *St. Basil*, *St. Austin*, &c. that the Christians of their days drew several kinds of Presages from a Body's sneezing at critical Times, from one's meeting a Cat in his way, or a Dog, or an ill Woman, or a Maiden, one blind of an Eye, or a Cripple; from a Body's stumbling at a thing, or being held by his Cloke as he steps out o'doors, or from a catching in one's Joint or Limb. *St. Eloy* tells his People plainly, that whoever gives heed to what he meets at his first going out or coming in, or to any particular Voice, or to the chirping of Birds, is so far Pagan. One need only read *Mr. Thier's* Treatise, to be fully convinc'd from the Censures of Popes, Provincial Councils, Synodical Decrees, Fathers, and other grave Authors, 1. That all these Superstitions, and many more of the kind, prevail among Christians; 2. That they are a Rag of antient Paganism.

And tho we had not such a Cloud of Witnesses in this Point, yet 'twere easy to prove the Disease originally Pagan. For, besides that they who preach'd the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST,

* See *Mr. Thier's* *Traité de Superstit.* ch. 23.

ne'er preach'd any thing like it, we find by several antient Pieces, that the Gentiles had all these Superstitions in the highest regard. This was one general Opinion among 'em, That the Eclipses of the Moon were an Effect of the Magick Power of certain Words, by which Sorcerers cou'd wrench her from the Skys, and drag her near enough to cast a frothy * Spittle on their Herbs, one of the main Ingredients in their Sorcerys. To rescue the Moon from the Torments she was in, and frustrate the Charm, 'twas necessary to prevent her hearing the Magick words, and drown 'em by Noise and hideous Outcry; the true Reason of the Peoples getting together at an Eclipse with the Sound of Trumpets and Horns, and rough Musick on Frying-pans and brazen Vessels, as now at a Cuckold's Consort. The *Persians* keep up the ridiculous Ceremony to this day, according to the Accounts of *Pietro della Valle*. It's likewise observ'd in the Kingdom of *Tunquin* †, where they imagine the Moon is just then in a struggle with a Dragon. In reading this, you can't well avoid thinking of those Passages in the *Psalms*, where 'tis said, The Poison of Asps is under his Lips, That he do's not hear the Voice of the Charmer; or granting the Christians, who fancy'd they reliev'd the Moon by their Outcrys, had drawn from the Cisterns of Paganism.

I shan't lose time to prove all the other Superstitions, censur'd by the Fathers, were borrow'd from Paganism. This is evident. I shall only

* Et patitur cantu tantos depressa labores,
Donec suppositas propior despumet in herbas. *Lucan. lib. 6.*

† See *Tavernier's new Relations*.

take notice, that 'tis to them we owe the imaginary raging Heat of the Dogstar, the pretended Presages of several Evils ascrib'd to Eclipses, and all the Illusions of Astrology. From whence it shou'd follow, that our Error concerning the Presages of Comets, springs from the same Source, and consequently is one Article of Superstition. One Remark I shall take leave to make on the Dogstar, That the *Romans*, to assuage its Malignity, annually sacrific'd * a great many Liver-colour'd Dogs near the Gate *Catularia*, so call'd either from the Star whose Victims were offer'd there, or from the Victims themselves, or rather from both together; it being hardly possible to make a distinction, because the original Reason of offering a Dog, rather than any other Victim, was only the Conformity of Names. Other Nations were not so nice, we don't find they offer'd a Dog rather than any other Animal to this Sign. And truly nothing's more ridiculous than to imagine this Star shou'd have a greater respect for one brute Beast than another: Yet they were equally Superstitious and Idolaters. And Christians content themselves with rejecting the last of the two Evils, as well in regard to Comets, as all other Objects of Superstition.

S E C T. XC. *Why the Fathers don't
condemn the Presages of Comets.*

I Confess, I no where find the Fathers have expressly condemn'd the Presages of Comets, as they do most other Superstitions of this kind. But the

* Festus, Ovid Fast. 5. † Apollonius l. 2. Valer. Flaccus l. 1.
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Reason undoubtedly is, 1. That the Vanity of the thing is not so easily discover'd here, as in most other Presages; it being not so evident, the appearance of a Comet portends nothing, as that a Sneeze portends nothing. 2. That the Returns of this Superstition are not so frequent as those for other Presages. 3. That they might think the Terrors of God's Judgments, awaken'd in the Consciences of Sinners on the sight of a Comet, very useful to bring 'em to Repentance. 4. That themselves might be Partys in the Error, their great Lights leading rather to the Truths of Religion than those of Natural Philosophy. Notwithstanding, as there are other Motives of indubitable Certainty sufficient to bring Men to Repentance, and a due Sense of God's Judgments, there can be no Sin in examining whether the Fear of Comets is well grounded, shou'd it happen Men might be deliver'd from a Terror useful indeed, tho vain at bottom: else we must approve all kinds of pious Frauds and counterfeit Miracles, whenever thought serviceable to Religion; which yet is a Practice the Church disowns. * *Let's not erect our own Imaginations, says St. Austin, into Objects of Religion; for better is the Truth of any kind, than the greatest Matter invented at pleasure.* Nay, 'tis going counter to the Mind of the Holy Spirit declar'd in those words of *Jeremiah*, † *Be not dismay'd at the Signs of Heaven, for the Heathen are dismay'd at them, to affright people with the Presages of Comets.*

* Non fit nobis religio in Phantasmatibus nostris, melius est enim quaecunque verum, quam quicquid pro arbitrio fingi potest. *Aug. de ver. relig. cap. 12.* † *Ch. 10. v. 2.*

SECT. XCI. *That it's wrong to censure those who won't lightly take up the Belief of an Effect's being Miraculous.*

PERmit me on this Occasion to take notice of the Unreasonableness of condemning Philosophy, because it recurs to Natural Causes, where right or wrong the People are resolv'd to admit none. This can only proceed from one very false Principle; to wit, That whatever's ascrib'd to Nature, is a Draw-back upon Providence: For in the Judgment of sound Philosophy, Nature is nothing else than God himself acting by certain Laws, which he has establisht of his own Free-will, and by the Application of Creatures form'd, and continually sustain'd by him. So that the Works of Nature are the Effects of the Power of God no less than immediate Miracles, and suppose as great a degree of Power to their production; it being altogether as difficult to form a Man by the ordinary Laws of Generation, as to raise him from the Dead: and all the difference between the Miracle and the Natural Effect lies here, That one is fitter to make us acknowledg God the free Cause and Author of all Effects in Body than the other, and to preserve from any Error in this point; in consequence whereof we naturally infer, That whatever is done in the way of Miracle, flows from some special Bounty, or particular Ends of Justice. But it do's not therefore follow, that Philosophers offend in keeping to Natural Causes as long as they may. For as *Plutarch* justly observes on the Case of *Pericles* and *Anaxagoras*, The Knowledg of Nature delivers

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from a State of Superstition, haunted with Distrust and panick Fear, to endue us with a reasonable Devotion, attended with the expectation of Good.

If the Pagans themselves cou'd observe, 'twas of the greatest Importance in Religion, more than any other Affair, not to be carry'd away by a Principle of blind Credulity, but thorowly to examine the Facts; because by neglecting a well-grounded Ceremony, there's the guilt of Impiety on one hand, and by engaging in an unlawful Worship there's the Danger of childish Superstition on the other: If, I say, the Pagans cou'd take this Truth, may not we justly rejoice that the Christian Philosophers rescue us from all the Prejudices apt to fully the Masculine, Genuine Beauty of Holiness? In short, there's so much probability, any Worship which subsists on a Fallshood, will one time or other degenerate, that we shou'd never give Quarter to Error, of what kind, or on what Pretences soever. I own the Scandal's less in encountring Errors before a long Possession has given 'em root in the Minds of Men, than when Antiquity has confer'd on 'em a kind of sacred Character. But as there's no prescribing against Truth, 'twere the highest Injustice to leave it continually bury'd in Obscurity, on pretence it never yet had seen the Light. I own too, our Conduct can never be too nice when we attack inveterate Errors in Religion; and 'tis in this View a certain Person has said, * *There are some*

* Dicit de religionibus loquens, multa esse vera quæ non modò vulgò scire non sit utile, sed etiam tametsi falsa sint, aliter existimare populum expediat. *Varro apud D. August. de civit. Dei, lib. 4. cap. 31.*

Truths which 'tis not only needless for the People to know, but even expedient to believe the contrary. There's hardly a Politician or Churchman but takes up this Maxim; yet I still insist, it's lawful to promote the Knowledge of the Truth in all Cases, provided we observe that Circumspection which Christian Prudence requires.

SECT. XCII. *In what Sense Grace corrects Nature.*

ONE Remark more, Sir, on what I advanc'd, That Christians are as prone to the Superstition of Presages as other Men; this shou'd not be. The Knowledge the Gospel affords of the Nature of God, the sound Instructions of those who train us up in our Christian Profession, shou'd cure us of this Vanity: But Man, alas! is still Man. The Author of our Being, not thinking fit to superstruct his Grace on the Ruin of our Nature, is pleas'd to bestow only what's just sufficient to ballance our Infirmitys. So that as the Ground of our Nature, subject to infinite Illusions, Prejudices, Vices, and Passions, subsists intire; 'tis morally impossible, that Christians, with all the Lights and Graces afforded 'em, shou'd not fall into several Enormitys as well as others.

SECT. XCIII. *How strangely Christians are infatuated to Presages.*

'TIS melancholy to look over the Catalogue of Superstitions, Mr. *Thier* has taken the Pains to collect, and which still find good Quarter among Christians, notwithstanding the Censures, and

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and Threats, and Prohibitions continually inforc'd by the Authority of Synods and Councils. Nor are they Superstitions only of the small kind, but sacrilegious Profanations, tho cover'd with a Vail of Piety, and the practice of abominable Devotions. I have already observ'd, how far the Phrenzy of Fortune-telling had possess'd the Western World; People are at last come off on't, yet the Curiosity reigning still, there's recourse to Methods much more unlawful. As for that kind of Presage founded on a thousand fortuitous Cases, one may venture to pronounce Christians incorrigibly bewitch'd to it.

Looking two days ago into *Prioleau's* Latin History, I observ'd 'twas taken for an ill Presage, that Monsieur the Prince of *Conde's* Sword dropt out of his Belt, as he was riding over the Field of Battel near *Jarnac*, where one of his Ancestors ended his Days. This was an ordinary Accident; and sure I am the Prince, whose Sense is Heroick as his Courage, in this a greater Hero than *Alexander*, who was all Superstition by fits, had not the least thought of a Presage; yet the Matter was magnify'd and much talk'd of. The falling of a Statue, a Pillar, or a Clock, furnishes hints for a thousand deep Reflexions thro a whole Town; the People never mention it without Presages tending to the Fall of him who erected the Pillar, or whose Arms were ingrav'd on the Clock. At *Rome*, where Speculations of this kind are more refin'd than ordinary, even to search in the Numerical Letters of a Cardinal's Name, whether ever he shall come to the Papacy, such an Accident in the Peoples Imagination costs a Pope, a Cardinal, or a King, his Life and Fortune, and sometimes

betokens the total Translation of a Government.

When the *Paris Gazette* was first set up, it bit freely at Tales of this kind; that of the 23^d of Jan. 1632. in the Article from *Vienna* says, A monstrous Birth in which the Twins were join'd, the Fall of a Pillar erected after the Defeat of the King of *Bohemia* at the Battel of *Prague*, and the sudden Death of a Minister of State, furnisht much matter of Speculation to the Expounders of Prodigys: The Monster signify'd some strange Confederacy; the Fall of the Pillar imported no less, tho the Gazette wou'd not blurt out the whole Secret, than the loss of all the Advantages the House of *Austria* had gain'd by the Ruin of the King of *Bohemia*, for whose Support this strange Confederacy was forming. 'Tis possible there might be a squint of Politicks in publishing this piece of News, as I observ'd before, where I gave the Character of the Female Newsmonger from *Juvenal*; and this 'tis plain was Monsieur *de Naudé's* Thought, who in his Dialogue of *Mascurat*, applys all *Juvenal* says on that occasion to the *Paris Gazetteer*. But let that pass, we may hereby plainly see, the Genius of the People of these Days is exactly that of the Antients, who liv'd upon Fable and vain Presage. I am only glad for the Honor of *France*, our Gazette has long since made over this sort of News to our Neighbors Gazettes, which have publish'd a thousand Impertinences on the present Comet. I know others rejoice as well as I, our Gazetteer has chang'd the Scene, and who had much rather read at one time what the Jesuits write him from *London*, to excuse their pious Enterprizes upon that Kingdom, at another what numbers the Missionarys

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convert in *Poitou* at the Head of five or six Squadrons of Dragoons, under the omnipotent Command of a vigorous Intendant: I know those, I say, who wou'd much rather hear a prating Gossip run on in Storys of this kind, than a thousand silly accounts of Prodigys.

I'll give one instance more to convince you the Passion for Presage is strongly riveted in the Minds of Men. Every one knows the Revolutions in Religion this last Age, and what an unrelentless War the Protestants wag'd with every thing they call'd *Popish Superstition*. The *Calvinists* signaliz'd themselves in this holy War, they gave no Quarter, yet these very Protestants never disturb'd the Superstition of Presages; they are as much infatuated this way as we, and their Writings abound in them. A *High-German* call'd *Peucer*, a Man of Parts, marry'd to *Melancthon's* Daughter, a furious Enemy to the Church, and a Physician to boot, relates the Lord knows how many Prodigys, which he fancys portended as many strange Events. *Wolfius*, a heady *Lutheran*, makes mention of some Vision, or Meteor, or Monster of bad Presage in almost every Page; and that's pretty fair you'll say, since he has compos'd no less than two huge Folio's of memorable Lessons. If ever you re'd a Book intitl'd, *Fatidica Sacra*, wrote by one *Neubusius* a *Dutch-man*, I dare say you're of my Opinion; there's no going beyond him in matter of good and bad Presage. Let's not think it strange then, that immediate Converts from Paganism retain'd a great many Superstitions.

SECT. XCIV. *How apt Historians are to affect the Wondrous; those of Charles V. for example.*

A Passion for giving all Events an Air of *Marvelous*, which runs so high in profane History, possesses Christian Historians too, and often betrays 'em into Observations trifling to the last. What, for example, is more impertinent than *Sandoval's* Remark in the Life of *Charles V.* That *Margaret*, Consort to *Philip III.* was born on *Christmas-day* between the hours of nine and ten in the Morning, precisely as the Mass-bell was ringing in a certain Church for the Elevation of the Host? A Presage, says he, of her extraordinary Devotion: That some Days after the depositing this Emperor's Body, a huge Bird came stretching from the East, and pitch'd on the Chappel of the Monastery of *St. Juste*: That a Cordelier of *Guatemala* in the *West-Indies* saw in a Vision the Devils bring an Accusation against him, and his Pardon soon after seal'd in consideration of his honest Intentions; whereupon God takes *Charles* by the Hand, and leads him to the Place appointed him in Paradise. How shou'd such a Man as this boggle at saying, a Comet or Eclipse portended the Death of this Emperor, since something of this kind hapning before that of his Empress, he had faithfully observ'd 'twas the Presage of her Death? Sure he forgot that a Comet really appear'd the Year *Charles V.* died, and a very remarkable Star it seems, which bending its course to the North, stopt directly over the Monastery of *St. Juste*,
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dwindled as * *Charles* dy'd, and the instant he fetch'd his last Breath totally disappear'd. Unhappy *Sandoval*, to forget such fine things!

SECT. XCV. *That when they make Comets Presages of the Death of Kings, they ne'er distinguish the Deaths which are prejudicial from those which are otherwise.*

YOU may think perhaps, because *Charles V.* was dead to the World sometime before he ended his Days, *Sandoval* cou'd not reckon his Death of Importance enough to be presag'd by a Comet or Eclipse. But you mistake, Sir, this is not the Rule: they tell you Comets presage great Evils, among which they constantly account the Death of Kings and Queens; never considering the Lives or Deaths of these illustrious Persons are sometimes of little Consequence, and make no Alteration in publick Affairs. The Death, for example, of *Charles V.* was of no moment to Friends or Enemies; his Retreat had quell'd all those Passions which kept *Europe* in a Ferment, and left all the World at ease, except the Monks of *St. Juste*, whose Sleep they tell us was often disturb'd by his early Rising. We have Instances of Crown'd Heads, whose Deaths are no Prejudice to the State, their Successors being as well or better qualify'd to reign, and better belov'd; to say nothing of those whose Deaths can't happen too soon, their Lives being a Curse, both to their own and the Neighboring Nations. In this Rank we may place *John Basilides*

* *John Ant. de Vera, & Figueroa, Comte de la Roca, in the Life of Charles V.*

Czar of *Muscovy*, who dy'd in 1584. two Years after the Appearance of a Comet. As for *Solyman* the Magnificent, you'll allow his Death a Mercy to *Christendom*. It's wrong therefore to conclude at large, that Comets, as Presages of Judgments, strike chiefly at Crown'd Heads; since 'tis certain, the long Life of some Princes is the severest Instance of Divine Wrath, and therefore likelier Comets shou'd presage Life than Death to these. In this sense * *Lucan* understands the extraordinary Preservation of *Marius*; and thus the Author of an Epigram on a Comet which terrify'd *Catherine de Medicis*, turns the Presage in opposition to the Astrologers, who said it portended the Death of a Queen, and great Calamitys.

† *Spargeret audaces cum tristis in aethere crines,
Venturique daret signa Cometa mali;
Ecce sua regina timens male conscia vita
Credidit invisum poscere fata caput. (natur,
Quid, Regina, times? Namque haec mala si qua mi-
Longa timenda tua est, non tibi vita brevis.*

I have already mention'd the Comet which appear'd on *Alexander's* mounting the Throne of *Macedon*. Had he dy'd soon after, as 'twas not impossible, what had the World thought? His Death had been noted among the great Misfortunes presag'd by this Star. Yet the Event has shewn, that the Fate of this young Prince, ante-

* Si libet uleisci deletæ funera gentis,
Hunc Cimbri servate senem, non ille favore
Numinis, ingenti superûm protectus amore.

† See the *Journ. of Henry III. Reign. An. 1577.*

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dated ten or twelve Years, had been an invaluable Blessing; and the greatest Service to Mankind was crushing the Madman in the Cradle.

* *Happy, had Macedon a Bedlam rear'd,
And some rough Keeper to its Prince prefer'd;
To a dark Room and Straw the Youth confin'd,
Nor ever let him loose on Human kind.*

Strange Prevention! If there be Kings whose Lives are more particularly struck at by Comets denouncing the greatest Woes, they're such, they imagine, as have rais'd their Glory highest, and attain'd the greatest Power: Whereas quite contrary, these are they, 'tis probable, Divine Providence watches over with most tenderness, when its purpose is to afflict Mankind. You'll believe this from the Mouth of an illustrious Conqueror, for one such Witness in the Case is worth thousands; mind the following Words, taken from the Reflexions of a † French Officer, a Person of excellent Sense.

I once had the Honor of hearing Gustavus Adolphus advance a Paradox, which makes to my purpose. One of his Courtiers extol'd the Progress of his Arms in Germany, his Valor, his vast Designs, and glorious Actions; and maintain'd there never were more conspicuous Instances of a gracious Providence. But for him, the House of Austria had made its way to Universal Monarchy, and the Ruin of the Protestant Interest. The Wonders of his Life were the highest Evidence, God had given him for the Deliverance of

* *Mr. Des Preaux Satyr 8.* † *Monf. de Caillere Fort. de gens de Qualité, 2 part. ch. 10.*

Mankind ; and that boundless strain of Courage a Present from Omnipotence, and a visible Communication of Infinite Goodness. Conclude rather, says the King, 'tis a mark of Divine Displeasure ; if the War I make be a Remedy, it must be more insupportable for the time than the Disease. Providence never deviates to form a Hero, but with a purpose to scourge the World. One sure Sign of its Favor to Men, is giving Princes but ordinary Souls : he who has no transcendent Elevation, moves within a Sphere : Glory and Ambition let him rest. If he apply to Business, so much the better for his People ; if he commit the Management of Affairs, and devolves his Authority on a Favorite, the worst can happen, is his enriching himself at the Peoples cost, laying on Taxes to have the fingerling of Mony, preferring his Friends, and mortifying his invidious Equals. These are slight Evils, and of no account, compar'd with those which the Will and Pleasure of a great King begets. His extreme Passion for Glory disturbing his own Rest, of necessity disturbs his Subjects too. He can't bear a Rival. He looks on all as Enemys, who won't be his Slaves : He's a Torrent sweeping all before it ; and who pushing his Conquests far as his boundless Ambition, fills the World with Terror and Confusion.

Thus you see how the general Prejudice, touching the Presages of Comets, runs Men at every change into downright Illusion.

SECT. XCVI. *More Instances of the Spanish Flights in Praise of Charles V.*

THE Hyperbolical Bounces of the Spaniards in praise of Charles V. are so exorbitant, that instead of doing Justice to the Character of this Prince,

Prince, they really derogate from his Glory ; not only because the Reader, who once perceives an Historian's affecting the *Wondrous*, is apt to call his Sincerity in question, but because his turning Panegyrist, and betraying his Character, incenses most Readers against him, and by a Counterstroke against his Hero, so that they never after relish his Praises.

I refer you to P. * *Maimbourg's* last Work, for a Specimen of the Flatterys of *Charles V's* Historians on occasion of his Victory over the Duke of *Saxony*, 1547. Not content to say, an Eagle kept hovering over the *Spanish* Infantry while passing the River *Elbe* ; that a Wolf from a neighboring Forest fell in among the Soldiers and was slain : they very seriously wou'd have us believe, that the Sun stood still that Day, to give the *Imperialists* time for compleating the Victory ; one of the greatest Miracles God wrought for establishing his People in the Land of *Canaan*. Nor are these Accounts hawk'd about in loose Papers on the first Arrival of an Express, but Relations standing in the correctest Works of grave Historians: a *Sandoval*, for instance, Historiographer to *Philip III.* and Bishop of *Pampeluna*, who adds, That on this memorable Day the Sun appear'd dy'd in Blood over *France*, *Germany*, and *Piemont* ; a *Don Lewis d'Avila*, Great Commander of *Alcantara*, Gentleman of the Emperor's Bedchamber, in a considerable Post in his Army, and present in the Action, who mentions this Prodigy as an Eye-witness ; more favor'd in this than the Duke *d'Alva*, Lieut. General in the same Army, and who had a great

* *Hist. of Lutheran.* l. 4.

share in the Honor of the Day. For our King *Harry II.* hearing of this Miracle, ask'd the Duke about it; who answer'd, *He was so much taken up that Day with what pass'd upon Earth, that he had not leifure to observe what pass'd in the Heavens.*

S E C T. XCVII. *A Word of Advice to the French Historians.*

I Have nothing to add in confutation of these Visions, to what * *P. Maimbourg* has offer'd with his usual Wit and Eloquence; but cou'd wish this Jesuit's Raillerys might be a Warning to our Countrymen, and make 'em guard against the *Spanish* Bombast whenever they mention the King, allow'd by all *Europe* one of the greatest of Princes. For, as I have observ'd, nothing's so great a Prejudice to a Monarch's real Glory, as our Historians continual Efforts to place him in all Respects above whatever has been said of former Heroes. Such Writers well deserve the Reproof given to certain Hereticks, who ascrib'd a Body to the Divinity, but the greatest Body imaginable: *Fecistis molem, fecistis minorem*; The greater the Bulk, the smaller your God. When I see this Affectation, methinks I see the antient Sophists of *Greece*, who got their Bread by Declamation and Panegyrick, form'd, not on any matters furnish'd by the Subject, but on foreign Ideas of whatever's astonishing.

The Evil might yet be tolerable if confin'd to the Harangues of the *French* Academy, ever on the *Sublime*, ever in Exclamation, and tortur'd

* *Hist. of Lutheran.* l. 4.

Images of Speech. No body expects the Character of a King in a Harangue or Dedication; here he's o' course the greatest of Monarchs, not excepting *Cesar* or *Alexander*; and here People bear without murmuring the loftiest Flights. But if our Historians, dazzled with the Glory of fine Description, lay themselves out in Harangue, I assure you, Sir, the *Spaniards* will laugh at us in their turn; and we shall become the Jest of *Europe*, as well as they for carrying the Elogy of their *Ch. V.* and *Ph. II.* to an inconceivable height. The Commissioners appointed for writing the History of our King won't, I presume, forget, that the Business now is not to represent moving Passions, or noble Sentiments, on an imaginary Stage, or excel in fine turns of Satyr and Ridicule, but faithfully to deliver the matter of Fact. They have besides a strain of good Sense, not easily to believe that the Sun stops its course to prolong a Battel, or that the Walls of a City tumble down by the virtue of a small Viol, as those of *Angouleme* in the days of * *Clouis*. Nay, I can't tell but they may be afraid 'twere making their Court amiss, to relate such Miracles; and expect to be told, Gentlemen, the *French* Bravery can do without this, their Ardor and Activity need not the Sun's standing till they dispatch: It might do well for *Spaniards* and *Germans*, heavy and sluggish in their Nature. We may therefore rely on these two Gentlemen †.

* See Thresor. Chronol. de Pierre de Sr. Romuald a l'an. 508.

† Racine & Boileau.

I had good hopes of a third * imploy'd in his Majesty's History, till I met with his Letter to a Prelat, inserted in a late Pamphlet †, which deserves an Answer from some good Pen. You know who I mean, the famous Author of the History of the *French Academy*; and can't be ignorant that the beauty of his Stile and Fancy, and his accuracy in composing the History of this illustrious Body, of which he's a principal Ornament, gave People the highest hopes of his present Undertaking. But I vow, Sir, this Letter has sunk above half my expectation, by discovering he keeps a stir about regulating the small Gratifications to the Hugonot Converts. He betrays a narrowness of Soul, inconsistent with the forming a History, so glorious as that of *Louis le Grand*. Think you, Sir, that a Person in pain about the few small Bills of Exchange drawn on him for the new Catholicks; who sees that the Lists of these poor Creatures be fully certify'd; who contrives a thousand shifts to make the small Fund now in his hands, and which he likens to the Widow's Cruise, hold out for the satisfying so many Conversions; who, to make it reach the further, exhorts my Lords the Bishops, by Letters expressly wrote 'em, to more thrift, by the Example of Mr. *de Grenoble*, who had not expended above 2000 Livers in converting seven or eight hundred Souls: Think you, I say, Sir, that an Historian, who beside this inquires how long a Man has been converted, and earnestly recommends, that no Bills be drawn on him for Converts above six months standing; and tho here and there they might present a Con-

* *Mr. Pelisson.* † *La Polirique du Clergé de France.*

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vert with a hundred Livers, yet this was not to be done every day, it being absolutely necessary to husband the Allowance? Once more, Sir, think you that an Historian, distracted with so many little Cares, is in a condition to give us a just History of his Majesty? If you believe he is, pardon me I'm not always of your mind.

I much suspect too the Work will have a Tang of Bigotry, and that he'll inform us the King's Victories are the Fruits of so many Edicts for reducing the Hugonots. Pity such a Wit shou'd make so false a step; and if possible to prevent it, pray let's prevent it. You, Sir, are well acquainted with several for whom he has a deference, with Mr. ———, and Mr. ———: tell him by these Friends, he runs the risk of marring the whole Work, by conversing only with Missionarys; that the superintendence of these little Affairs gives an odd Turn and Taste perfectly exotick; that dealing so much in the Clergy's Affairs, 'tis fear'd he'll make his Hero's pious Deeds the principal Scope of his History; that some Catholicks as well as Hereticks think to have him here; and if he dwells on the extirpation of Calvinism in detail, he sinks his Character, and gives suspicion he had not a Talent for chusing the bright Scenes of a Monarch's Life.

But what do I mean in giving all this in charge to you? I humbly ask pardon, Sir, and blush I shou'd speak so indiscreetly to a Man of your Coat. No, Sir, you are not a proper Person to bid the King's Historian beware particularizing. But I know a Friend will undertake it freely; for I have often heard him say, were he to write a History of our Times, he'd content himself

self with a pompous description of the Dangers of Heresy to Church and State, and the Advantages arising from a reunion of Partys : Then in few words conclude, That the King, penetrated with these eternal Truths, had accomplish'd the mighty Work, in a manner worthy the most Christian King, and worthy the Hero ; dextrously avoiding a nice discussion of all the Methods suggested to his Majesty, because it's manifest this cou'd only tarnish his Glory. 'Tis not necessary, says he, a Prince born for the greatest Things, who shou'd have pitch'd his Lilys on the Banks of *Euphrates* long e'er now, where one of his Poets has stood waiting for him these six Years past, shou'd be taken up with the Affairs of Midwives, and with putting that whole Business into the hands of a Party ; * *with revising the Lists of new Converts*, and the Sums expended on each Conversion, and consulting whether 'tis *advisable sometimes to bid up to a hundred Livres for the gaining a considerable Soul*. Here's my Man, who'l take care there's no particularizing in the Affair of Conversions. He's in great credit with the Historian, and probably will have an influence, especially about the Edict which declares Children of seven Years old capable of perceiving the *Roman Church* more agreeable to Scripture than the pretended Reform'd. They'l keep aloof from this Article, if well advis'd.

As for the Point of Oeconomy, which Mr. *Pelisson* presses so earnestly to the Convertists ; I believe he'l pass that over, tho not put in mind how open it lies to Raillery : He never had wrote the

* Lettr. de Mr. Pelisson.

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Letter, cou'd he imagine they'd have publish'd it. For can any thing in Nature be more shocking to the King's Honor, than saying, 1. That the miraculous Providence which multiply'd the five Loaves, and fill'd the Widow's Cruise, is the only Ressource of the small Funds appointed to pay the Converts? 2. *That my Lords the Prelats, and others, who charitably engage in the Work of Conversion, can't make themselves more acceptable to his Majesty, before whom the Lists of all the Conversions are laid, than by following the Example of the Diocess of Grenoble, where they hardly ever came up to a hundred Livers, and were generally much below.* All Europe is sensible of the King's immense Riches, and his vast Expende in every Article: And yet for a Project where Religion is concern'd, we're told the Funds are extreme small; that the Miracle of the Widow's Cruise is the whole Ressource, and that nothing can be so acceptable to his Majesty, as husbanding the Sums set apart for Conversions.

As for Prodigys, this Author, 'tis possible, may be persuaded to spare 'em. But I shan't answer for the Seculars and Regulars, imploy'd in writing the History of our Times. They'l plague us with Miracle and Presage; and so much the worse, Sir, as there's not an Error in Nature more indefensible. The more I think, the more I'm convinc'd on't, and can hardly forbear flying out into Indecencies against the Publishers of these Falshoods; yet still they croud 'em in, and our Historians with as little scruple as our Neighbors. Look me out Mr. *de Peresix*, who had the honor to be the King's Preceptor, and died Arch-Bishop of *Paris*. In his History of *Harry IV.* he relates I know not how many Prodigys preceding this

King's Assassination; and, what's remarkable, they are exactly the same the Pagan Historys have left us on a like occasion. Mere Illusion!

SECT. XCVIII. *The French Historians confuted, who mention several Presages of the Death of Harry IV.*

THE Death of this good King put People on collecting and magnifying several mere natural Effects, which are drop'd if no memorable Event succeeds. Hence the Time of this Murder is distinguish'd by many extraordinary Phenomena: 'tis possible there might be such about that Time, and such as no one e'er observ'd before, as may happen in some Years more than others, by the general Laws of Nature; and were they noted only to distinguish the Year 1610. there cou'd be no Exception. But 'tis pretended these Phenomena were design'd expressly to denounce the Miserys of *France*, and the Murder of its King. This I think unwarrantable, because it supposes 'em put forth by the extraordinary Power either of God or of the Demons. To say this of God, is ascribing a Conduct to the Divinity unworthy of his Wisdom, because they've no Characters of the particular Misery impending. To ascribe 'em to the Demons is a Jest: 'Tis not their Interest to warn a most Christian Kingdom, as they do Idolatrous Nations; For what cou'd they propose? only mens making Restitution, or going to Confession; and this is what they least design. Besides, having no insight into Futurity, they can't fore-know the Revolutions of State, and consequently can't direct Presages. But you'l say perhaps, God

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affords Presages to convince Men, future Things are in his disposal. 'Tis the Thought of a judicious Historian, who summing up the Prodigys in question, makes this Reflection: *It looks as if the Notices given him by Heaven were not so much intended to preserve this Prince, as to convince others, there's a Sovereign Power which disposes of future Events, since 'tis so apparent it foreknows 'em.* But this, as all other Opinions on this Head, is confuted by my former Reasons: For who in *France* doubted a Supreme Power ordering all Events, when *Harry IV.* was murder'd? Is not this one of the first Principles of Religion? Don't all who offer Vows, and Prayers, and Sacrifices; who consult Oracles, or Astrologers; who give heed to Presages, or the Cant of Fortune-tellers, plainly confess some Supreme Power regulating future Events? Whereabouts are we, if Miracles be needful to create a belief in a most Christian Kingdom, which the Pagans were never void of? When shall we be the faithful Nation, if to convince us of God's Foreknowledg we require Sign upon Sign, and Prodigy upon Prodigy? Let's conclude then, the Intention of Providence is not what *Mezeray* supposes, since this were an Intention without an End. And his acknowledging Prodigys don't prevent the Danger, is owning they are not Presages in the Divine Intention. I shall say something in another place to support this Reasoning, when I have gone thro the Remarks design'd to expose the Infatuation of Christians to Presages.

SECT. XCIX. *Further Proofs of the Prejudices of Christians for Prodigy and Presage.*

I Find a Passage to my purpose in a Treatise written by *Abogard* Bishop of *Lyons* in 833. This Learned Prelate compos'd a Book to undeceive a world of People, persuaded there were Enchanters who cou'd command Thunder, and Hail, and Tempest, to destroy the Fruits of the Earth; and drove a great trade by this Mystery, with the People of a certain Country call'd *Magonia*, who came once a Year sailing in large Fleets thro the Air, to freight with the blasted Corn, for which they paid down ready Mony to the Enchanters. So little was the matter doubted, that one day the Bishop had much ado to save three Men and a Woman's being ston'd to Death, the People insisting they were just fall'n over Board. The Passage is at the latter end of the Treatise in these words: * *So strange a Folly possesseth a wretched World, that Christians firmly believ'd Absurdities, which no one cou'd ever make the Gentiles believe.*

I don't examine whether it's true in the strictness of the Letter, that People were more credulous in this Age than in the days of Paganism. 'Tis enough they were very credulous; and hence Men began to write their Historys in the stile of Romance, mixing a thousand Fables with the Deeds of great Men, such as *Roland* Nephew to *Charlemagne*. Which so vitiated the Taste of the

* *Tanta jam stultitia oppressit miserum mundum, ut nunc sic absurdæ res credantur a Christianis, quales nunquam antea ad credendum poterat quisquam suadere Paganis.*

Age, that no Book wou'd afterwards go down in any other Stile: witness the *Manual of Devotions* by *James de Voragine* Archbishop of *Genoa*, compos'd towards the latter end of the 13th Century; and at which *Melchior Canus*, a Learned Spanish Bishop, is so scandaliz'd in his 11th Book of Common Places. I'll bring another Doctor † of Divinity to vouch for the deprav'd State of the Times; thus he speaks: 'Twas the Error, or rather Folly of some of the Antients, to think, that in writing the Actions of Illustrious Men, the Stile must sink, unless they mix'd the Ornaments, so they call'd 'em, of Poetical Fiction, or something this way; and consequently blended Truth with Fable. This being the Case, I'm tempted to think the Historys of the *Crusades* deliver things somewhat suspicious: 'Tis manifestly *P. Maimbourg's* || Opinion, for thus he proceeds, after the relation of the Battel of *Iconium*, won by *Frederick Barbarossa* 1190. What was chiefly wonderful in this Battel, was the Conqueror's sustaining little or no loss, which most ascrib'd to the particular Protection of *St. Victor*, and *St. George*, Names oftneft call'd upon in the Christian Army, and whom many said they beheld ingaging at the head of the Squadrons: Whether in reality there might be something in't extraordinary, which has often hapned, as the Scriptures inform us; or whether by often hearing of celestial Squadrons appearing at the Battel of *Antioch* in the first Crusade, warm Imaginations possess'd with the belief, and penetrated with these Ideas, form'd new Apparitions of their own. But sure it is, that one *Louis Helfenstein*, a Gentleman of Reputation, and far from Visionary, affirm'd to the Emperor on his

† *Piscus* in *Galfredo Monimetenfi*. || *Hist. Crusade*, l. 5.
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Oath, and on the Vow of a Pilgrim devoted to the Holy Sepulchre and the Crusade, That he often saw St. George charge at the Head of the Squadrons, and put the Enemy to Flight; which was afterwards confirm'd by the Turks themselves, owning they saw some Troops in White charge in the first Ranks of the Christian Army, tho there were really none of that Livery. No body, I know, is bound to believe Visions of this kind, subject for the most part to notorious Illusion: But I know too, that an Historian is not of his own Authority to reject 'em, especially when supported by such remarkable Testimony. And tho he's at liberty to believe or no, yet he has no Right, by suppressing 'em, to deprive the Reader of his Liberty, when he meets with Passages of this kind, of judging as he thinks fit. This Reflexion from so celebrated an Historian, not suspected of favoring the Hugonot Incredulity, is a strong Presumption o' my side.

Here, Sir, is something of a fresher Date; you know the Ceremony of *Mademoiselle's* Marriage with the King of Spain was perform'd at *Fontainebleau Aug. 31. 1679.* and that soon after this Princess came to *Paris*, where she pass'd thro a terrible Course of Harangue. But perhaps you mayn't know her Majesty was told at the Fathers of the Oratory, That the Glory of being the Band of an Eternal Union between the two greatest Monarchys o' the World, and of a general Peace, was reserv'd for her Sacred Person: Heaven had long since promis'd so it shou'd be; the Emperor Ch. V. (here's the proof of the Promise) typify'd this by that mysterious Lily his August Hands planted in the Garden of his Solitude towards the latter End of August 1558. For the Moment this Monarch expir'd, which hapned in the following Autumn, the Root of this Lily shot forth

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forth a Stalk two Cubits high, with a marvelous Flower, as full blown and odoriferous as these Flowers usually are at their ordinary Season. Certain Presage, Madam, that a miraculous Lily shou'd be transplanted into Spain about the End of August, at a time when the Glory of this Monarchy was under a kind of Eclipse; to carry thither in Autumn, together with the Blessings of Peace, all the Joys of the Spring.

What's most astonishing in all this, is not, that at the Head of one of the Learned'st Societys in the World, the Compliment to a Queen shou'd turn upon a groundless Conceit, who with all her Youth had Wit and Quickness enough to take the Whim. We're not to bear too hard on those who speak in publick; let 'em enjoy the Privilege they have always * had, of sparkling at these times in all their false Jewels. But what astonishes me is, that the greatest Part of those who read the Harangue in the *Mercure Galant*, were struck with this passage, and verily believ'd the Lily to be the Type of this present King of Spain's Marriage. So true is it, that we are given to find out Mystery and Presage in every thing. The *Comte de la Roca*, Grandson to *Don Louis D'Avila*, and who has wrote the History of this Emperor as well as he, tells the Story of the Miraculous Lily after a different manner, and turns the Presage another way; which shews these Observations are sometimes false in Fact as well as Reason.

* Rhetori concessum est sententiis uti falsis, audacibus, subdolis, captiosis, si modò verisimiles sunt & possunt ad movendos hominum animos qualicunque astu irrepere. *A. Gell. Noct. Attic. l. i. c. 6.*

SECT. C. *A new Observation, shewing, the Antiquity and Universality of an Opinion are no Marks of its Truth.*

BE pleas'd now to think a little, whether the general Consent of Antients and Moderns be a reasonable inducement to believe Comets of evil Presage. It's mere Illusion, I say once again, to imagine, an Opinion which passes from Generation to Generation, may not be false. If we inquire ever so little into the Causes which establish and perpetuate Opinions, we shall find nothing so weakly founded as this Pretension. You'l grant it's no hard matter to confirm false Notions, which are agreeable to the first Prejudices of Youth, or the Passions of the Heart, as the pretended Rules of Presage are. I desire no more. This suffices to render these Opinions eternal, because none, except a few Philosophical Minds, ever dream of examining whether what they see allow'd on all hands be true or no. This every one supposes done long since, and that the Antients have clear'd the Coast of all Error; and therefore delivers in his Turn to Posterity as infallible. Think of what I observ'd before of the Sloth of Mankind, and the Pain of examining Things accurately; and you'l agree, that instead of saying with *M. Felix*, * *All things are obscure*

* *Omnia in rebus humanis dubia, incerta, suspensa; magisque omnia verisimilia quam vera; quo magis mirum est nonnullos tædio, investigandæ penitus veritatis, cuilibet opinioni temerè potius succumbere, quam in explorando pertinaci diligentia perseverare. Some Copies read, Quo minus mirum.*

to Human Understanding; but the more obscure they are, the more we shou'd wonder, that so many, to avoid the trouble of a strict research, will take up with the Opinion next at hand, rather than sound the Matter to the bottom: we shou'd say, *The more obscure they are, the less we shou'd wonder that many, &c.* The * Author of the *Art of Thinking* judiciously observes, that most Men determine their Belief to one Opinion more than another, by certain external and foreign Marks, suppos'd to belong to Truth rather than Falshood, and which are obvious and easily perceiv'd; whereas the intrinsick and essential Reasons distinguishing Truth, are very difficultly trac'd. So that as Men naturally study their Ease, they almost always veer to that Side on which they discover these external Marks. Now you know, Sir, Antiquity and Universality pass current among us for a couple of these external Marks.

I know those who wou'd not be marry'd in the Month of *May* on any Consideration, because, say they, it has ever been observ'd unlucky: And I doubt not this Superstition, deriv'd from antient *Rome*, and founded on their celebrating the Feast of Evil Spirits, *Lemuralia*, in this Month, will subsist among Christians to the End of the World. There needs no more for observing it in a Family, than remembring the Grandfather or Uncle had such a Fancy. This is an invincible Reason, and which makes the deeper impression, as we see Men of Understanding under the same Prejudice. In short, there's many a Man, who without the least Superstition will hasten, or put

off his Wedding-day, to avoid the Month of *May*; because 'tis his interest People shou'd not think him doom'd to ill Luck. We must despise nothing in this World. A Merchant might become really unfortunate, by a ridiculous Opinion of his being threatned with Misfortunes; and People be loth to give him credit, or venture in the same Bottom with him. Shou'd one inquire into all the Causes of Popular Errors, there were no end.

SECT. CI. *A convincing Argument of the Error of Presages.*

THEY carry the Abuse to the very Scriptures. For they who tell us, that the Manner of *Tamerlain's* giving his Blessing to his two Sons, by bowing down the Head of the elder, and chucking the youngest under the Chin, was a Presage of the last's Elevation in prejudice to the first, ground their Opinion on the 48th of *Genesis*; where *Jacob* blessing his two Sons, laid his Right hand on the Head of the younger, foreseeing by Inspiration he shou'd be the greater of the two. In the mean time there's a difference between the two Benedictions. The *Tartar*, wholly destitute of the Knowledg of future Events, did not diversify the Motion of his Hands o' purpose to establish a Presage; and God never vouchsafing this Knowledg to Infidels, did not guide his hands in a particular manner to form a Presage of what shou'd befall his Children: Whereas *Jacob* on the contrary, fill'd with the Spirit of Prophecy, whereby he foresaw the Fortunes of his Children, directed his Words and Actions according to this Knowledg; by which means both became Presages. We

We ought to consider, the Knowledg of Futurity coming from God alone, there can be no Presage of Things contingent, which is not immediately appointed by him. So that if meeting a Weasel be a Presage, it must be such by virtue of an eternal Law, chaining the Weasel's Motion at such an instant to some other Effect. Now as 'twere absurd to say, God has appointed infinite Kinds of such Combinations, to apprize Men all the World over of the future; The future, I say, which he declares he has reserv'd in his own Breast *, to confound the Gods of the Heathen, and which he communicates to his Prophets only by a special Grace: As 'twere unworthy the Wisdom and Goodness of God, supposing he meant to forewarn us of a Destiny which yet we cou'd not avoid, to make use of uncertain obscure Signs, as all pretended Presages are, we must pronounce 'em humane Inventions, and not Institutions of a wise Providence, as *Petronius* † has justly observ'd with respect to Dreams.

Here, methinks, are two unanswerable Reasons against Presages. First that they are innumerable, if we admit all believ'd as such for current. Not a Year pass'd without Prodigys in *Rome*; and did we take the pains to join all the Remarks in History concerning Presages, from beginning to end, we might make a Chain to reach thro all the Series of Time without interruption. If we consult the credulous, nothing remarkable ever besel 'em

* *Isaiah, chap. 41.*

† *Somnia quæ mentes ludunt volitantibus umbris,
Non delubra Deum nec ab æthere numina mittunt,
Sed sibi quisque facit.*

without a Prefage. From whence we may conclude they are vain Imaginations : because of one hand this shews. Men immovably perswaded of a Supreme Power, to whom the future is known; and consequently, that Miracles are needless to bring 'em to this belief: and on the other hand, if God really appointed these Prefages, he must be said to warn Men extraordinarily, and continually, which implys a manifest Contradiction. Were this the Case, we might well say with *Maximus Tyrius* *, that the Divinity plac'd himself on the Highway to tell the Passengers Fortunes.

A Second Reason is, That the Prefages in question don't only never point out Things to come in an intelligible manner; but, what's worse, can ne'er prevent 'em. This I prove, from Peoples never taking one Thing for the Prefage of another, till that other is actually come to pass; for bewitch'd as we are to Prefages, we ne'er believe we have had the Prefage of a thing which never happens. If a Gamester loses all his Mony, he's not such an Ass to fancy he had Prefages of winning; and shou'd he fancy some kind Prefage before-hand, yet he changes his Opinion as soon as he finds himself stript. The Pagans, who thought themselves warn'd by Prefage, and endeavor'd to ward the Blow, had only confus'd and general Notions of the Evil before-hand; and if nothing happen'd amiss, they presently believ'd the fancy'd Prefage was all Illusion. So that 'tis the Event only which proves the Prefage, and consequently shews it of no service for preventing the Evil.

* Orat. 3. p. 29.

Besides, if Presages might direct us to avoid our Destiny, Mr. *de Mezeray's* Reason ceases, since this puts the future in our own power, and tempts us to deny God the supreme Disposal of Events; the preventing of which, in this Historian's Mind, is the sole End of Presages. The only use then of this Knowledge of Presages, I can imagine, is to imbitter our Lives by distant Prospects of Misery; which yet is supposing God works continual Miracles to afflict Good and Bad without distinction, long before the Evils come to pass. But as this is repugnant to the Idea of God, which represents him Great and Good in all his Ways, and void of all Tincture of Malice and Mischief, we must acquit him of being the Author of those Presages, and condemn the Pagans Murmurings against the Divinity as most unjust, in being rendered doubly miserable, as they fancy'd; 1. By the Presages of future Evil. 2. By the Evil it self; as we read in *Lucan's* *Pharfalia* *.

*Supreme of Heav'n, who rulest Human Kind,
Why hast thou to their Woes this Fate assign'd,
To read in Omens dire the coming Doom,
And in anticipated Wrath consume? —*

*O hide his Fate! Or when thy Thunders roll,
Let the swift Stroke dispatch the guilty Soul;
Prevent th' Inflictions of its own Despair,
Nor farther let thy needless Mercy spare.*

* Cur hanc tibi, rector Olympi,
Sollicitis visum mortalibus addere curam,
Noscunt venturas ut dira per omina clades?
——— Sit cæca futuri
Mens hominum fati, liceat sperare timenti.

Lucan. Pharfal. l. 2.

Blind Wretches! They ascrib'd that to God which sprung from their own deluded Judgments. They were the sole Authors of all their Presages, not only by believing 'em at first without the least ground, but by running thro the power of this Prevention into the Evils they judg'd presag'd; and thus riveting the Error by an arbitrary Accomplishment and wilful Experience. And here lies the whole Secret of Divination. An Astrologer tells one he shall die soon after: The Man, simple enough to believe him, falls into a deep Melancholy, and dies in good earnest. This Death gives Astrology such credit, that 'tis believ'd there's no frustrating its Predictions. So that if a Girl be told the Horoscope matches her to such a one, from that Moment she resolves upon't as a thing predestin'd; which brings the Matter easily about, and fortifys the Illusion.

I might carry this Thought much further: But as Comets are my chief Care, 'twill satisfy for this time, Sir, if you conceive, That 'tis not only very possible the General Opinion of their Presages shou'd be false, considering the Methods of establishing it in the Minds of Men; but that it's absolutely impossible it shou'd not, considering the Repugnancy of this Opinion to the Nature of God.

June 23. 1681.

SECT.

SECT. CII. First Objection against the Argument from Religion: *God has form'd Comets, that the Pagans might acknowledge a Providence, and not fall into Atheism.*

I See only one considerable Objection to what I have establish'd by my Seventh Argument. It may be said, The Intention of God was not to promote Idolatry, but convince the World of a Providence, which dispenses Good and Evil, loves Mankind, won't see 'em perish without calling 'em to Repentance; and who therefore merits their utmost Love and Gratitude. Here, say they, is the End God propos'd in exposing Comets to human View. This is an End worthy the Divine Goodness and Wisdom. Comets, it's true, have been an occasion of Idolatry; but the Idolaters alone are to blame, who wou'd not understand what God requir'd by 'em. And after all, these, and other Prodigys have been of great Use, by preserving Men from Atheism, the Bane of Human Society: * *Horace* in effect confesses, that Thunder in a clear Sky had recover'd him from the Error of *Epicurus*, who deny'd a Divine Providence.

* Ode 34. l. 1.

SECT. CIII. I. Answer: *God never works Miracles, to destroy one Sin, by establishing another; Atheism, for example, by confirming Idolatry.*

I Answer; All this do's not ballance the ill Consequences of the Opinion I confute. For,
 1. 'Tis not consistent with the Divine Wisdom and Holiness to work Miracles, which shall only drive out one Sin by another. We justly say, God brings Light out of Darkness, and that even the Corruption of Sinners, thro the All-wise Dispositions of Providence, serves to promote his Glory. Yet 'twere absurd to say, he directly causes this Darkness, only to bring Light out of it; or this Corruption, as a means of manifesting his Grace. 'Twere Blasphemy to say, God do's Evil that Good may come of it; makes Men Idolaters, to prevent their being Atheists. But if the bare Position be Blasphemy, what must it be to maintain, That God wrought Miracles, which, as Matters once stood, must of necessity seal Idolatry on the Hearts of Men? What, I say, to ascribe such Miracles to God on a pretence of their preventing Atheism? Isn't this affirming, God has by Miracles concur'd to promote Idolatry, rather than suffer Atheism; that is, has concur'd to an exceeding Evil, not to obtain an exceeding Good, (for the Extinction precisely of Atheism, is not a saving Grace, neither do's it glorify God, as he requires) but only to avoid a greater Evil? A worthy Object indeed of the Greatness of God, and an End becoming his Wisdom; to overturn the Course of Nature, only to
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cast out one Evil by the Power of another, near as bad, and infinitely detestable in his sight. Do we find JESUS CHRIST, or the Saints, ever work'd Miracles, to heal one Disease by another, a Palsy by a Dropsy? What sort of Miracle must this be? Beware then, Sir, of imagining God has wrought Miracles to confound Atheism, but confirm Idolatry; and think how unlikely 'tis he shou'd grant it even a bare Toleration, after all the displeasure he has express'd against this Sin. Had he design'd to destroy Atheism in an extraordinary way, is it likely he'd make choice of that, which manifestly tends to establish the thing he so much abhors, that which provokes him to Jealousy, as the Scripture expresses it?

Don't you think, Sir, this Idea of a *Jealous* God design'd to teach us, he'd rather not be known at all, than see his Honor given to another; and consequently wou'd prevent Mens falling into Idolatry rather than Atheism, supposing he interpos'd by Miracles, in either case, to the prejudice of Man's Free-will? 'Tis not my business to decide this Point. I'll only observe, that Jealousy prompts a Husband to wish his Wife had never known him, rather than know others beside him. To which I add, God cou'd not make the Extinction of Atheism by Idolatry, nor contrarywise Idolatry by Atheism, the End or Object of his Miracles: 1. Because Bad is the best of the two, and inconsistent with the Honor of God. 2. Because it's evident from other Heads, God never acts supernaturally, unless to manifest his Will in a clear and express manner, fit to conquer the grossest Ignorance.

Tell

Tell me no more then, God work'd Miracles to extinguish Atheism, unless you add, he extinguish'd Atheism to plant his true Knowledg and Worship in its room. For if you leave out this, I shall be driven to say, God confounded Atheism by his Miracles, that *Jupiter* and *Minerva*, *Venus* and *Mercury*, and a world of Pretenders beside, shou'd reap all the Honors due to him alone; which is manifestly against Divine Revelation, God expressly declaring, and swearing by himself, *My Glory I will not give to another, nor my Praise to graven Images*. Neither say, that God was honor'd indirectly at least, by those who worship'd *Jupiter* and *Juno*, &c. for nothing's falser or more repugnant to Scripture: because tho the Heathens always pretended to worship the Divinity, and refer'd all their Worship to this Idea; yet God has ever rejected it as not directed to him, and lookt on't as Sacrilege, and an Alienation of his Rights, deserving the severest Punishment. Nor yet must you alledg some of the Fathers, who maintain'd, the Stars were plac'd in the Firmament by a particular Providence, to prevent Mens falling into Atheism by the continual Sight of Objects seeming worthy their Adoration: Beware, I say, of this Objection; for it's too horrible to be endur'd, tho we shou'd find it in several pieces of the Fathers. Let's admire their Holiness as much as you please, but not scruple to say, they reason sometimes amiss. Your own *Sorbonne* does not adopt all they say; and very often, after you have celebrated their Feasts, and recommended your selves to their Prayers, the next thing is to confute their Doctrines.

SECT. CIV. II Answer: *There was no Necessity of preventing Atheism by Idolatry, and Comets were not fit to prevent it.*

BUT suppose the Wisdom and Holiness of God shou'd permit his working Miracles, to destroy Atheism by the Power of Idolatry; 'tis never the more true, he has in fact wrought any for this end, because God does nothing in vain, and there never was a necessity of Miracles to prevent Atheism and Irreligion. 'Tis morally and naturally impossible, an intire Nation shou'd change the Belief of a God, and the Usages of Religion, into a contrary Belief and Usage. We can scarce conceive how a single Person, thro a brutish Degeneracy, or the Power of false Notions, can extinguish the Ideas of a first Cause, on which all things depend, and to which they all owe Homage. How then is't possible, the Body of a People train'd up in the ways of Religion, accusom'd to fly to God in distress, and bless his Name in prosperity, under the Prejudices of an awful Fear, and the Practice of many Superstitions, shou'd change to a total Renunciation of the Divinity? He who considers the Genius of the People ever so little, must grant the thing's impossible. What need then of creating Comets so often to prevent an Evil which can never happen? what more usefless than such Miracles?

They might serve, you'll say, to convert those who did not believe a God. I say, it's false: for if, as we're inform'd by some Relations, there are Nations discover'd void of all Sense of Religion, it follows, Comets have not the Power of introducing a belief of the Divinity in Countrys void
 † of

of his Knowledg. And besides it's evident, they who are not convinc'd by the ordinary or extraordinary Works of Nature, who can imagine the World produc'd by Chance, the Motions of the Heavens regulated without the Direction of a supreme Being, all things form'd by a fortuitous concurrence of Causes, are likely to make the same Judgment of all the Stars or Blazes which shall appear anew. So that 'tis more than probable, a Comet, of what length soever you make it, shall never bring those to acknowledg a God, whom all the beautiful and regular Works of Nature, Eclipses, Earthquakes, Tempest, Thunder and Lightning, have not convinc'd.

SECT. CV. *Of the prodigious Inclination in the antient Pagans for multiplying false Gods.*

AS for the Nations we are acquainted with in antient History, there was so little danger of their falling into Atheism, that their principal Passion was for Numbers and Variety of Gods and Religions. You know the Remark of a Christian Poet * writing against *Symmachus*, that the City of *Rome* multiply'd its Gods in proportion to its Victories; and can't forget *Juvenal's* † Raillery,

* *Romæ triumphantis quoties Ducis inclyta currum
Plausibus excepit, toties altaria Divum
Addidit, & spoliis sibimet nova numina fecit.*

Prudent. in Symmach.

† ————— Nec turba Deorum,
Talis ut est hodie contentique Sidera paucis
Numinibus, miserum urgebant Atlanta minori
Pondere.

Juv. Sat. 13.

that

that poor *Atlas's* Back was almost broke with the Weight of so many new Gods and Goddesses. You know there's no kind of Creature the Heathens did not deify; that they worship'd the Pot-herbs in their Gardens, sacrific'd to the Wind and Tempests, rais'd Altars to Impudence, Calumny, Fear, Fever, Death it self inexorable as 'tis; that they exalted their Kings and Emperors to the Rank of Godhead, not only after Death had deliver'd 'em from a visible Subjection to all human Infirmitys, but while expos'd in all their Frailtys. Here's no Exaggeration in this; they who are acquainted with Antiquity confess it. What I observ'd of their Kings and Emperors, is confirm'd, as well by the Custom of the *Persians*, who worship'd their Kings with a Worship strictly so call'd, and which several Strangers have refus'd to pay out of Principles of Conscience; as by the *Roman* Custom, in swearing by the Divinity of the living Emperor, and building him Temples and Altars by his Command or Connivance, as appears by the extraordinary Embassy which the People of *Tarragona* sent *Augustus* with the News of a Palm-tree's growing out of the Altar they had consecrated to him: Which *Augustus* thought not very probable, since he answer'd 'em in a deriding way, *He found they did not burn many Victims on his Altar.* Yet this Altar and Temple were left standing, with many more to the same God, some of which were supply'd with Societys of Priests establish'd o' purpose for his Worship; and others rais'd in that small Corner of the World God reserv'd to himself, for you can't be ignorant that *Herod* built Temples to *Augustus* in *Judea*. Generally speaking, the Custom of Deifying the Emperors

was so establish'd among the Pagans, that tho *Constantine* had quitted their false Religion for the Christian, of which he dy'd a faithful Member, yet they rank'd him among the Gods after his Death: Which however is no stranger to me than the *Stoical* good Nature of *Marcus Aurelius*, who, lessen'd by his Wife's unbridl'd open Leudness, had notwithstanding a Temple built to her Honor, and Divine Worship paid her after Death.

Atheism then upon the whole was the lesser Evil; consequently God cou'd not work Miracles to prevent it: Whence it follows, had he contributed by Miracles to the strengthning the Kingdom of Idolatry, he had by Miracles contributed to the greater Evil purely and abstractedly, which is not to be mention'd without Horror.

SECT. CVI. III Answer: *Tho 'twere to be fear'd Atheism shou'd build upon the Ruins of Idolatry, yet there was no need of Miracles to prevent it.*

I Go farther, and say in the third place, Tho there might be some Ground to fear Atheism's taking root in the World, yet there was no necessity of Miracles to prevent it. 'Twas sufficient to let Nature work its own way; we might securely rely on the good Will of Men and Demons.

SECT.

SECT. CVII. *Natural Effects might prevent Irreligion.*

I. **I**N effect, Bodys acting continually on one another, must needs produce a thousand surprising things from time to time, as Monsters, Meteors, Tempests, Inundations, Mortalities, and horrible Dearth. And as where People are under the Power of Religion, they consider these Effects as Intimations of a particular Providence calling for a Reinforcement of Worship and Devotion; 'tis impossible, as the World's made, the fear or belief of a God shou'd ever be worn out. So that without forsaking the general Laws, God had store of Phenomena to make his Name rever'd, from the Course and Chain of second Causes. A slight Reflection on what has been said of the Proneness of the Pagans to take the least trifle for a Prodigy, is sufficient to convince us in this Point.

SECT. CVIII. *Policy might prevent Irreligion and Atheism.*

II. **B**UT besides mens natural Inclination to the practice of outward Acts of Religion, whenever they conceive themselves threatned by Prodigys; we must consider 'tis the Wisdom of the Magistrate, and all who have the direction of Civil and Sacred Affairs, to keep People in subjection by the strong curb of religious Fear. 'Twas ever known, Religion's a main Bond of Society, and Subjects never better kept in their Duty, than when Arguments from this Topick were artfully

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im-

employ'd : That nothing animated 'em more to the defence of their Country, than first ingaging the whole Heart to certain Devotions perform'd with pompous Ceremonys in certain Temples, under a Protection, experienc'd a thousand times over, of certain Divinitys; and then making 'em believe, the Enemy, who wou'd profane those holy Places, are menac'd with a terrible destruction by the Presages of the Victim. To give these Engines scope to play, 'twas necessary not only to have a Religion authoriz'd by the Magistrate, but that the People be possess'd with an awful respect and veneration for all the Exercises of it. So that good Policy taught men to improve whatever might inflame a Zeal for Religion, and inspire a profound Reverence for the meanest Ceremony. Judg then, Sir, if there was any danger of mens falling into Atheism.

SECT. CIX. *The Interest of the Priests might prevent it.*

THE Peoples Reverence for Holy Things reaching to the Persons officiating, 'twas natural these shou'd invent several Artifices to maintain superstitious Persuasions; thus they made themselves more necessary, and rais'd the Dignity of their Office so high, that the Greatest aspir'd to it. There have been Crown'd Heads who valu'd themselves on a skill in Augury. King *Dejotarus* was his own Soothsayer, and probably trusted his own skill, when he took *Pompey's* side against *Cesar*. Several others, considerable for their Birth or Stations, set up for the same Knowledg. The *Roman* Senate order'd six Youths
of

of the noblest Familys to be sent to each Nation of *Etruria*, and there instructed in the Augural Discipline. They judg'd, that raising the Dignity of this Profession by the Quality of the Persons, they prevented the Abuse to which all Callings are subject, by being in the hands of covetous and mercenary * Men. 'Tis on this Principle, the celebrated Cardinal *Pallavicin* has most learnedly and piously prov'd, the Catholick Church ought to be on the foot of Temporal Power, to ingage Lords and others of the first Quality in her Interest, by the prospect of considerable Preferments, which wou'd effectually maintain the Honor of Religion; for who dare despise the Ceremonys of the Mass, if he who officiated had the best Equipage, and kept the best Table in the Country?

But if by this Conduct the *Romans* provided against the Abuses of filthy Gain, they fell into another Inconvenience as bad. For Augurs of this Quality, inspir'd with Ambition, labor'd to extend their Empire over the Souls of Men, by inventing many Ceremonys, imposing a new Yoke of Forms and Scruples, and getting infinite Prodigys reported, of which they were the sole Interpreters. This Office of making Inquisition concerning Prodigys, and finding ways for their expiation, made 'em consider'd as Mediators between Gods and Men. They began to fancy they had the Keys of Heaven, that they averted the impending Calamitys; in a word, that the Publick Safety was lodg'd in them. Judg now, Sir, if in these Circumstances Prodigys were like to be

* Ne ars tanta propter tenuitatem hominum a religionis auctoritate abduceretur ad questum. *Cic. de Divinat. l. 1.*

scarce. Do you doubt, the least natural Effect was not sometimes cry'd up as a Mark of the Wrath of Heaven? Don't you fancy they had Expresses laid to bring the news to the Capitol, that a Wolf, for example, walk'd at Noon-day into the Heart of a Country Town, that Horses were seen in the Air? &c. These Tales were a Gain to the Pontiffs, and Priests, and Augurs, as much as Law-Suits and Sickness to Quacks and Pettifoggers; and therefore they took care not to let the People grow slack in the Business of Religion.

SECT. CX. *How fond People have been of believing Prodigys supernatural.*

THEY had brought 'em to such a pass, that they cou'd not bear the Philosophers attempting to explain the natural Reasons of Prodigys: For *Plutarch's* * our Voucher, that in the days of *Nicias*, that is, in the fourth Age of Rome, one durst not open himself unless to his best Friends, and with the utmost caution, about the Cause of Eclipses of the Moon, which *Anaxagoras* had newly taught. He adds, This was the reason Physicians were so odious in those days, because they discover'd the necessary and natural Causes of what was always ascrib'd to God; for this *Protagoras* was banish'd *Athens*, and *Anaxagoras* cast into Prison, from whence *Pericles* with all his Credit and Eloquence had much ado to release him: And that with much difficulty the People were reconcil'd to Philosophy by the Lights

* In vita *Niciz*.

borrow'd from *Plato's* Doctrine, which subjects the necessity of Natural Causes to the Divine Power. I shou'd approve the Peoples Zeal, had the Philosophers pretended to exclude the Divine Influence in the Effects whose Causes they explain'd. But this was not that which made 'em wild; the Grievance was, That by explaining the Physical Causes of Prodigys, they put an end to Presaging, and rob'd them of a thousand vain Imaginations they us'd to feed on, and the Soothsayers of the best Branch of their Revenue. *Statius* * is in a mighty Passion at his Heros, who seeing an Arrow rebound from a Tree upon him who shot it, instead of confessing it an extraordinary Prodigy importing the return of *Adrastus* to the War of *Thebes*, wou'd pretend to examine it by natural Causes.

SECT. CXI. *The Priesthood and Sovereign Power have been sometimes in one Person.*

I Further observe, there were some States in which the Priestly † and Regal Office were join'd. Of this Number was the *Roman* Empire; it being evident, that as the Emperors seiz'd the Office of Tribune of the People, to render their Persons more sacred and inviolable, and ingross the whole Power of the People, so they

* *Muta Duces errore ferunt*——

——— *Penitus latet exitus ingens*
Monstratumque nefas, uni remeabile bellum.
Stat. lib. 6. Theb. 1.

† ——— *Rex Anius,*

Rex idem hominum Phœbiq; sacerdos. Virg. Æn. l. 3.

united the Pontifical Dignity to the Imperial, as well to govern in the Affairs of Religion, as to render themselves more and more inviolable by the Sacred Character; the Pontiffs being subject to no Punishment, nor accountable to any Power of Senate or People. A farther Reason might probably be, to prevent this Dignity's falling on a Person, who wou'd abuse its many Privileges to the Emperor's Prejudice, as might naturally happen. This Union lasted long after the Baptism of *Constantine*, was suppress'd by *Gratian*, and reviv'd afterwards in some of his Successors. We find the like Union in the *Saracen* Empire, whose Caliph was Head of the Church and State at the same time. In other Countrys the Priests alone were dispensers of Justice: In *Egypt* for example, and *Gaul*, where the Druids had the whole Charge of Religion, and decided Civil Causes. In some States, the Affairs of Religion, the chief Offices in the Commonwealth, the expounding of Laws Sacred and Profane, was the Prerogative of one Order only, the Nobility for example; such was the Constitution of *Athens* by *Thesens*. In others, as the Republick of *Rome*, it belong'd to the Senate, on the Report of the Pontiffs, Augurs, &c. to appoint Processions, Sacrifices, Holy Banquets, &c. I leave you to judg on the whole, whether due care was not taken to keep up Religion in full force; there being a concurrence of two Powers, each of which in particular found its account in preserving it.

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SECT. CXII. Care taken to punish the Contempt of Religion.

THerefore it's plain from History, they omitted nothing to prevent a contempt of Religion, and keep up the Peoples Reverence for Holy Things. *Socrates* was put to death in *Athens*, because his Doctrine tended to render the establish'd Religion suspected. The *Roman* Senate having given the Pretor *Petilius* a Commission to inspect the Writings of *Numa* *, found in a stone Box 400 Years after his Death, and heard the Pretor's Report of their containing things very foreign to the present State of Religion, and consequently capable of raising a thousand Scruples in Peoples Minds; the Senate, I say, order'd 'em to be immediately burnt, justly apprehending a general contempt of Religion, if the People discover'd they were not the same which *Numa Pompilius* had learn'd from the Goddess *Egeria*. This Persuasion had pass'd current from Father to Son, because Changes in these Matters are made by degrees insensible, or scarce perceivable in a single Life; whereby every one thinks he leaves Religion at his Death in the state he found it at his coming into the World. In the mean time these imperceptible degrees, in the course of some Ages, go a great way.

The same Senate had a particular esteem for the Religion of Presages, and depriv'd the honourablest Persons of their Impleys, when the Choice was not agreeable to the Augural Mysterys. They disgrac'd the Consul *C. Flaminius* † for fighting in

* Plutar. in vita Num. † An. Rom. 531.

contempt of the *Auspices*, tho he gain'd a memorable Victory over the *Gauls*. *P. Claudius* and *L. Junius*, who in the first *Carthaginian* War shew'd a contempt for the same *Auspices*, were more severely treated, for it cost 'em their Lives. To pin the Yoke of Augural Ceremonys the faster, they made the Multitude believe, every Defeat of the *Roman* Armys was a Punishment of the contempt for Presages, or the General's omission of some religious Ceremony. They told 'em, for example, the Consul *Q. Flaminius* * was beat by *Hannibal* near the Lake *Thrasymene*, because he had the rashness to fight without regard to his Horse's stumbling, the moment he gave the word to move against the Enemy, or to the Account brought him, that the Colors cou'd not be wrench'd from their Place; that the Consul *Varro* † lost the fatal Battel of *Canna* thro *Juno's* Indignation, for having plac'd a handsom young Comedian || Centry in the Temple of *Jupiter* during the *Circensian* Games: An Offence 'twas thought necessary to expiate by various Sacrifices, after an interval of many Years.

If to these Observations you add what I hinted before, of the Demons doing their utmost to intimidate the People by a thousand kind of Presages, well satisfy'd they cou'd bring forth no other Fruit than endless Acts of Superstition and Idolatry; you'l easily conceive, Sir, the World sufficiently secur'd from the danger of Atheism, tho God did not interpose by extraordinary Preservatives.

* An. Rom. 536. † An. Rom. 537. || Valer. Max. l. 1. c. 1.

SECT. CXIII. *That the Demons are fonder of
Idolatry than Atheism.*

AND on this give me leave to tell you my Thought, that in all probability the Devil finds his account more in Idolatry than Atheism; from whence it shou'd follow, he imployes all his Artifices to plunge Men deeper in that Sin than in this. The Reason in my opinion is, That Atheists pay him no Homage directly or indirectly, and even deny his Existence; whereas he has such an interest in the Adorations rendred to false Gods, that the Scripture frequently declares the Sacrifices offer'd to them are the Sacrifices of Devils*. The Fathers teach expresly the same. Now this Son of Pride, this Enemy of God, wou'd undoubtedly have the Worship, retrench'd from the Divinity, accrue to him, as in effect it does where Men are Idolaters; rather than receive no Homage at all, as it must ever happen in a Nation of Atheists. I even believe he'd be content to come in for a small share in the Worship due to the Sovereign Being, rather than see all mankind Atheists: because this Partition wou'd serve to damn Men, and rob God of his Glory, what the Devil chiefly aims at; and bring him in Honors beside very fit to gratify his Vanity, which he cou'd not expect among Atheists. The Case is different between the lawful Proprietor, and a Pirate; between the Galant, for example, who has a Passion for his Neighbor's Wife, and the good Man. The latter, were he to chuse, wou'd ra-

* 1 Cor. 10. 20, &c. Tertul. de Idolol. c. 15.

ther see his Wife indifferent to all the World, than her Affections divided between him and another; unless he's one of those commodious Husbands, who trampling under-foot the Sacred Laws of Wedlock, reprints his Wife's Infidelities upon the next Adventurer. But for the Gallant's Part, he's in no such pain at his Mistresses entertaining kind Thoughts of the Husband, unless arriv'd to a romantick Delicacy indeed, provided he's allow'd the same freedoms. Don't think strange of this Comparison, since Idolatry is so often mention'd in Scripture as an Adultery committed against the Honor of a Jealous God; and permit me to use it as an Argument to prove the Devil had rather Men shou'd worship the Divinity and him, than worship nothing at all.

From all these Answers to the Objection, you'll allow, I presume, the appearance of Comets has been extremely favourable to Idolatry, without being in the least necessary to prevent Atheism's dissolving Human Society; consequently, that Comets are not Signs given by God in an extraordinary manner.

SECT. CXIV. IV Answer: *That Atheism is not a greater Evil than Idolatry.*

THIS being the Case, there's no need of making a Parallel between 'em, to shew Idolatry is at least as abominable as Atheism; for 'tis not necessary for my purpose this Paradox shou'd be true. 'Tis what I have heard maintain'd, by one of the ablest Men of *France*, and one of the best Christians I know any where.

Permit

Permit me only to offer a few of his Reasons, and paraphrase, or comment upon 'em as I think fit.

SECT. CXV. First Proof: *Imperfection is at least as repugnant to the Nature of God, as Non-existence.*

HE alledg'd in the first place, That to be divided into several Divinitys, and subject to all the Infirmarys of the Heathen Gods, was as repugnant to the Divine Nature as not Being. Therefore Idolaters, who deny the Unity and Holiness of God, make a Judgment as absurd, and dishonorable to him, as Atheists who deny his Existence: For, as the Marquis *de Pianezza* * has justly observ'd, To believe there's no God is less injurious to the Divinity, than imagining him what he is not, or what's inconsistent with his Being. If God, says *Tertullian* †, *be not undivided, he exists not; for 'tis more honorable not to be, than be what's incongruous.* There's more Extravagance then, more Brutishness, more Phrenzy, more Blindness in his Opinion, who owns all the Gods of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, almost infinite in Number, disturb'd by all the Passions, defil'd by all the Vices which reign among Men, than in the Opinion of an Atheist. *Plutarch* goes further, and says, 'Tis a higher Affront to the Divinity, to believe him such as the Superstitious do, than not acknowledg him at all.

* In his Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion, translated into English by Tho. Wise B. D. † Deus si non unus est, non est; quia dignius credimus non esse, quodcumque non ita fuerit ut esse debebit. *Tertull. contra Marc. l. 1. c. 3.*

I can't * forbear wondring at Peoples calling Atheism an Impiety; Superstition may properly be call'd so, but not Atheism. And 'twas just to condemn Anaxagoras of Impiety, in maintaining the Sun was a Slate; but no body will call the Cimmerians Impious, because they don't believe there's a Sun in the World. What! is the Atheist, who disowns a God, guilty of Impiety? but is not he who believes the Divinity, such as the Superstitious conceive, guilty of an Absurdity surpassing that of Atheism? For my part, I'd much rather all Mankind shou'd agree Plutarch never was, than say Plutarch was an inconstant, giddy, peevish Man, who took the least disrespect to heart, fell into ill humors at every Trifle; pin'd away, if forgot at a merry-meeting; was insolent to those who had any dependance on him; cou'd pull you in pieces if you pass'd by without the profoundest Reverence; take your Child home to Dinner, and pump out the Secrets of your Family; or let his Hounds loose on you by night, to drive and destroy your Cattel.

SECT. CXVI. 2d Proof: Idolatry the greatest Iniquity, in the Judgment of the Fathers.

THE Second Reason is, That the Fathers of the Church have pronounc'd Idolatry the highest Transgression, the great Sin †, the greatest of Sins ||, the first and last of all Iniquitys **. The Angelical Doctor is of this mind, who says,

* In his Treatise of Superstit. † Principale crimen generis humani, summus seculi reatus. Tert. de Idolol. c. 1. || Summum Delictum. Cyprian. Epist. 10. ** Gregor. Nazianz. Orat. 38.

* Of all the Sins committed against God, the most enormous is that of mens rendring to the Creature the Worship due to the Creator; because as much as in them lies, they set up another God, and depose the Divinity. The Sin of the Christians, who sacrific'd to Idols in the Persecutions, was call'd *Prevarication*, was not remitted by the antient Discipline at the Hour of Death; and was an everlasting Bar to the Clericature.

SECT. CXVII. 3d Proof: *Idolaters downright Atheists in one sense.*

A Third Reason is, That if one rightly examines the thing, Idolaters will appear as thorow Atheists, and as void of the Knowledg of God, as those who formally deny his Existence. For as 'twere not knowing Man, to imagine he's made of Straw; so 'tis not knowing God, to conceive a finite, imperfect, impotent Being, with several of his Equals about him. The Pagans therefore having no juster Idea of God, we may properly say they knew him not, or destroy'd by their Idea what they establish'd by their Words, as has been remark'd of † *Epicurus*. This was what St. Paul meant by reproaching the Heathens ||, That when they knew God, they glorify'd him not as God; but were carry'd away by their own Imaginations, and blinded with the Excess of Folly, and prodigious Darknes, so as to change the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image

* Secunda 2a Quæst. 94. Art. 3. † Epicurum Deos verbo posuisse, reverà sustulisse. Cic. 3. de Nat. Deorum. || Rom. cap. I.

made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beasts, and creeping things: That is, they boasted of having the Knowledge of God; but their God was only a Spectre of the Brain, an Idea so fraught with Contradictions, that they were sunk to a total Ignorance of the great Creator of Heaven and Earth. This Apostle in another place * says, *The Gentiles were without Hope, and without God in the World.*

SECT. CXVIII. 4th Proof: *An Idolater's Knowledge of God serves only to render his Sins more heinous.*

IF there be any difference between the Atheism of an Idolater, and that of a profest Atheist, it lies here, That the Idolater's Atheism do's not serve to extenuate his Sins; whereas the Atheist, by being born, we'll suppose, and bred among people who never had a Sense of the Divinity, will find some mitigation of his Punishment on the score of Ignorance. For in sound Divinity, and by the express Declaration of JESUS CHRIST, He who knew the Will of his Master, and did it not, shall be more severely dealt with, than he who neither did, nor knew it: Which shews there's a greater degree of Malice in the Conduct of the first than the last; and that *Minutius Felix* is wrong in maintaining without any limitation, *That not knowing God, is as foul a Crime as offending him.* Perjury therefore and Sacrilege, and the Commission of all Crimes which the Idolater believes provoking to his Gods, are more heinous in him than

* Ephes. c. 2.

in the Atheist. The State then of the Idolater is worse than the Atheist; because both being equally estrang'd from the True God, and equally incapable of serving him, the Idolater alone has certain Notions and Principles he can't act against without extreme Malice, and the open Contempt of his Divinitys. Now tho God challenges no part in the Honor paid to *Jupiter* suppose, or *Neptune*, but looks on't as an Abomination deserving the utmost Vengeance; yet he's interested in the Impietys committed against 'em. So that when a Pagan believing in *Jupiter* or *Neptune*, robs their Temples, or reviles their Names, he's guilty of Sacrilege and Blasphemy in the sight of the living God. And *Caligula's* Sin in defying *Jupiter* to a fair Duel*, and flinging Stones towards Heaven whenever it thunder'd, with these words, *Destroy me, or I'll destroy you*, was as heinous, as the like Madnes in a Christian towards *JESUS CHRIST*; unless we suppose, the Christian's Persuasion stronger than *Caligula's*, or the want of such Persuasion more excusable in *Caligula* than the Christian. For to know the Aggravations of the same Sin in different persons, we must know not only the differences of Conviction, but likewise which of the two has maliciously contributed most to his own ignorance; it not being impossible a Man may continue in wilful Blindness, lest Knowledge shou'd controul his wicked Courses, in which case Ignorance is no excuse. So that if *Caligula*, believing *Jupiter* the God, who causes Thunder and Lightning, and rules the World, was yet transported to such Outrages against him, there's

* *Dion Cassius lib. 1. Seneca de Ira lib. 1. cap. ult.*

as much malice in his Sin, *ceteris paribus*, as in the Christian's, who professing JESUS CHRIST to be God, shou'd notwithstanding break out into such Excesses against him.

This shews, that demolishing the Temples of false Gods, or destroying their Images, is no such good Work, unless springing from a good Principle; I mean a well-conducted Zeal for True Religion: And therefore all Acts committed against the Principles of their false Religion, or the Lights of Conscience, were real Sins in the Pagans; tho their fairest Deeds, agreeable to these false Lights and Principles, were not good Works. Which we are not to think strange, there being many more Circumstances requisite to make an Action Good than Evil *. To adore what one falsely calls his God, is Idolatry: To trample it under foot, is Profaneness. These two Actions are diametrically opposite, yet their Quality is the same. God resents an Affront offer'd to the false Gods, by those who believe 'em true, as design'd to himself; but he do's not construe their Worship and Honor by the same Rule. Whence it follows, that the Atheist can't offend God so many Ways, nor with so much Malice, as the Idolater: And therefore setting Comets a blaze extraordinarily, to make Men Idolaters rather than Atheists, had been doing something extraordinary to make 'em more wicked and more miserable. I put you in mind, Sir, once for all, that by Atheists I always mean, not such as have wilfully stifled their Sense of God, to give themselves over to Sin without remorse, but such only as have never heard of a God.

* *Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quolibet defectu.*

SECT. CXIX. 5th Proof: *Idolatry renders mens Conversion more difficult than Atheism.*

A Fifth Reason is, That nothing indisposes Men more for embracing the True Religion than Idolatry. For tho there are Examples, that the Superstitious and Idolaters, once converted, have more Zeal in the right way, than those who turn from a pure Indifference to their false Religion; yet generally speaking, the Idolater's Zeal is a more pernicious disposition of heart than Irreligion: because Persons over-run with Bigotry, and wedded to false Principles, submit to the Truth with more reluctance, than the loose and inconsiderate. And hence it seems better to be an Atheist than a mop'd Idolater; because it's probable the Preachers of the Gospel, explaining our Mysterys, and confirming 'em by signal Miracles, might sooner open the Eyes of those who had never chose their side, I mean, who had no Religion, than those infatuated with the Antiquity of their Ceremonys, and rooted in the Faith and Worship of Idols.

SECT. CXX. *Parallel Cases proving this.*

Common Sense will tell us this, and Experience confirms it. Propose a Case to a *Cartesian* or *Peripatetick*, which do's not quadrate with the Principles he's engag'd in; you see him much less solicitous about examining fairly what you offer, than casting about for Reasons to oppose it. Propose it to one of no Sect or Party, you find him teachable, and ready to comply with-

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out wrangling. It's much the same when one attacks a bigotted Heretick, or such as Cardinal *Pallavicin* calls rather not Catholicks, than Hereticks; *Magis extra vitia, quam cum virtute*. It's a Maxim besides in sound Philosophy, that 'tis harder to beget Habits in a Mind, which has contracted contrary Habits, than in a Mind intirely void. It's harder, for example, to make an Old Man liberal, who has been a Miser all his life, than a Youth as yet neither Liberal nor Covetous; just as 'tis easier to bend a Body one way which was never bent at all, than another bow'd the contrary way. It's therefore reasonable to believe, the Apostles had converted more Souls to JESUS CHRIST, had they preach'd the Gospel to People of no Religion, than they did among those possess'd with a blind Zeal, and wedded to the superstitious Rites of Paganism. Nor is any thing truer, than that the cruel Persecutions of the first Christians proceeded from Principles of bigotted Idolatry: For as they were the best Subjects in the World, continually preaching Obedience to the Magistrates, and never shewing the least inclination to repel Force by Force; no Reason of State cou'd induce the Emperors to use 'em as they did, or the Governors of Provinces to execute their Orders with more Barbarity than they directed.

These Persecutions were rais'd against 'em, purely on account of their decrying false Gods. 'Twas the blind Zeal of Idolatry, which exasperated the Emperors against the Cross of JESUS CHRIST; or rather, which prompted those who had their Ear, to inspire Sentiments of Hatred against the Christians, inspir'd by others into them.

them. Had no body appear'd in the pernicious Interests of a false Religion, the Gospel had spread without controul. So that one may say, had God form'd Comets miraculously from time to time, he had work'd Miracles from time to time, to dispose Men for rejecting the Cross of his Son, and doom'd 'em by an obstinate Idolatry to encounter the Faith.

I know the Opposition of Idolaters serves to set forth the Greatness and Power of God, and the Divinity of the Gospel. But 'twere absurd imagining on this Principle, that God by an extraordinary Providence prepar'd such means for glorifying his Power. Neither his Justice nor Goodness will suffer him to administer Sinners Occasions of hardning 'em; tho his Wisdom finds, in their wilful undecreed Obduracy, several admirable ways of manifesting his Glory.

SECT. CXXI. *It's hard for those who have long plac'd their Affections on any thing, to turn 'em on a quite contrary Object.*

BESIDES, tho you object, it's only directing the Idolater's Zeal aright, to make him a blessed Votary; That whereas there's no feeling in a Pagan's Conscience, who has made a mock of his own Religion, one meets in a superstitious Pagan with good Ground to sow in: That it happens here as with some Women of amorous Constitutions, who once past the Age of pleasing, turn their Thoughts to God, and love him more tenderly than e'er they lov'd the Creature: That an Indevote who goes over to the true Religion, carries his Insensibility and Deadness with him,

with many like Reasons more ; I am nevertheless right. It's possible, what's objected may happen in some Instances ; but you'll allow at the same time, there are infinite Examples of the contrary. We see several, whose Souls are so wasted in loving the Vanities of this Life, that when Age or Misfortune gives a Distast, they only lose their loving, and continue to disrelish the things of Heaven, rather more than those on Earth. We see others who can ne'er exhaust their Affection for the World, who dote on't to extreme old Age, notwithstanding its Repulses and cold Airs. Some, uneasy in not being at the top of the Mode, give a Spring towards getting above the World ; but want of Use and Acquaintance with heavenly things rendring these tasteless, they quit 'em some time after, to overtake their old Master, who's got a great way before 'em : The number of these is considerable ; for as P. Rapin * has it, *The greatest part of those who grow old in the Vanities of the World, and begin to think of Salvation, consider Devotion as the last shift, and therefore see nothing comfortable in't, because they see with a carnal Eye : their Disgusts at a World, disgusted at them, make 'em think of God, without feeling the secret Pleasure there is in serving him. The things of this World floating before their Eyes, they can't discern those which are promis'd ; and, possess'd they were wholly made for the present Life, behold nothing in Futurity which is not enough to dishearten.* This is the more general Case. We see others who abjure their Herefys and Indevotion together, who change from Irreligion to the perfect Fear of God, and sometimes even to

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superstitious Practices, in imitation of that King of Rome whom *Livy* describes: * *He fell into a tedious Sickness; then was his haughty Spirit so decay'd with the Strength of his Body, that he who ever thought Devotion the most unkingly Quality before, of a sudden turn'd Bigot, liv'd under the Power of all the great and little Superstitions, and brought Religion into vogue by Example.* These are therefore only Instances confronted with Instances: so that the surest side is to follow the general Rule, which in all parallel Cases is follow'd without Scruple, to wit, *That a Man bewitch'd to a false Religion, resists all the Lights of the true, more than he who is under no Prepossession.* You'll allow, had *Julian* the Apostate been an Atheist, with his other Qualities, he wou'd ne'er have play'd the Christians so many Pranks: whereas he gave 'em continual Vexation, infatuated, as he was, with the Superstitions of Paganism; so infatuated, that a Historian of his own Religion cou'd not forbear saying in an air of Raillery, † *Had he return'd victorious from his Expedition against the Parthians, all the Oxen in the Roman Empire had not been sufficient for his Sacrifices.*

* Ipse quoque (Tullus Hostilius) longinquo morbo est implicitus. Tunc adeo fracti simul cum corpore sunt spiritus illi feroces, ut qui nihil antè ratus esse minus regium, quam sacris dedere animum, repente omnibus magnis parvisque superstitionibus obnoxius degeret, religionibusque etiam populum impleret. *Liv. dec. 1. l. 6.* See *Plutarch likewise in the Life of Numa.* † Julianus superstitiosus magis, quam sacrorum legitimus observator, innumeras sine parsimonia pecudes mactans, ut æstimaretur, si reverterisset de Parthis boves jam defuturos, Marci illius similis Cæsaris in quem id accepimus, οἱ λευκοὶ βόες Μάρκῳ τῷ χρίσσει αὐτὸν σὺ νικησῆς ἡμεῖς ἀπωλόμεθα. *Ammian. Marcell. lib. 25.*

SECT. CXXII. *6th Proof: Neither the Heart, nor Understanding, fare better with Idolaters than Atheists.*

A Sixth Reason is, That if we consider Pagans and Atheists by their Disposition, either of Mind or Heart; we shall find the State of the first altogether as inordinate as the last.

SECT. CXXIII. *Considerations on the Pagans Judgment of God.*

IF we consider Atheists in their Judgment concerning a Deity, whose Existence they deny, we see a horrible Blindness, a prodigious Ignorance in the Nature of things, an Understanding which runs riot at all Principles of good Sense, and takes up with a way of reasoning fallacious and loose, beyond Expression. But pray, Sir, do we find the Judgment Pagans made of God, a jot more reasonable? The Pagans, who believ'd a vast number of Divinitys, with each his own Interests apart, his private Views and Passions; so that the Worship paid *Jupiter*, for example, did not in the least avail to appease *Juno*, but 'twas possible to be in favor with one God, while persecuted by another: The Pagans, who bestow'd different Sexes on their Divinitys, and the Relations of Father, Son, Husband, Wife, in all the degrees of human Consanguinity: The Pagans, in a word, who believ'd a Coachman's taking the Reins in his left hand, by mere Accident, without the least malice, mar'd the good Intentions of a publick Procession, and prevented the Divine Indignation's

tion's being in the least assuaged, which only for him was in a fair way of being totally appeas'd. All these Judgments, with many more the Pagans form'd, which 'twere tiresome to pursue, plainly suppose the Divine Nature finite, subject to Appetites, and Caprices unworthy of a Man of Character; and rob the supreme Being of his Omnipotence, Eternity, Spirituality, Justice, and other Perfections: without which, the Contradiction is as great in supposing him to exist, as in denying his Existence, and perhaps greater. There's no Man of sound sense, who has discover'd that Existence can't be excluded out of the Idea of God, but must discover, that Holiness, and Justice, and Infinite Power are more inseparable from the Divine Nature. So that it shocks Reason more to say, there's a God subject to all Failings and Frailties, than to say, there's no God at all. This in my opinion proves the false Judgment of Pagans concerning the Divine Nature, at least as great a brand of Infamy on human Reason, as downright Atheism.

SECT. CXXIV. *Reflections on the Ridicule of Pagan Religion.*

Therefore we see the Pagans cou'd never form a coherent or rational System of Divinity. They were all Blindness, Phrensy, and Contradiction of this side. And I maintain, were there intelligent Beings, which knew Man by his Definition only of *Rational Animal*, and not by his History, 'twere impossible to persuade 'em, the Books of *Arnobius*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Tertullian*, *St. Augustin*, *Firminus Maternus*, &c. a-

gainst Paganism, were wrote against a Religion ever actually in Being. No, say they, you mistake the matter, these are Fictions and Romance, Tales invented by idle Wits, who strove to excel in Grotesque and wild Chimera's, to find Game for their Satyr and Invective. For what Probability is there, that Creatures endu'd with Reason, shou'd form a System of Religion on Absurdities which destroy themselves at first sight, rather than on rational Principles and consistent Doctrines?

Yet 'tis too true, to the Scandal of Human kind, and the eternal Damnation of the greatest part on't, that the Books of these antient Fathers confute only real Errors, which have even found * Advocates among the Learned. Wretched Advocates, it's true; for what I said of Judicial Astrology's being a harvest of Triumphs to all its Antagonists, is incomparably truer of the Gentile Idolatry. No one ever wrote against their abominable Follies, who did not sink 'em with the weight of Reason: No one ever wrote a tolerable Apology for 'em, not for want of Wit, or good Sense in the Writers, but want of Merit in the Cause: A Cause so destitute of any Colour, there was no need of Eloquence to expose its Falshood, no strains of Eloquence cou'd save its Credit. So that one may justly wonder, a Poet † of Reputation shou'd express any Concern, when entering the Lists with an eloquent Pagan, and call it, *committing his ill-steer'd Vessel to the impetuous Waves*:

* Sed jam pudet me ista refellere, cum eos non puduerit ista sentire. Cum vero ausi sint etiam defendere, non jam eorum sed ipsius generis humani me pudet, cujus aures hac ferre poterunt. D. August. Epist. 56. † Prudent. l. 2. contra Symm.

you need only a Whip (they are the Words of the excellent Author, whose reasoning I pursue) to rout Legions of Pagan Apologists arm'd *Cap-a-pe*. And I don't doubt, were the powerful *Carneades* to take their Station, he'd see all that Eloquence founder, to which *Cicero* * gives this Character, *That it never undertook a Cause but carry'd it, never oppugn'd any but overthrew it*: And who made such an Impression on the Roman Senate, when sent in a joint Embassy from *Athens*, that they resented † the *Athenians* deputing Persons not to persuade, but force 'em to their own Terms. Infomuch as *Cato* the Cenfor || propos'd remanding 'em immediately, because *Carneades's* Speech rais'd a new Mist, which sunk the Characters of Truth and Falshood.

SECT. CXXV. *We must not judg of the Pagan Religion from their Poets.*

BY the way, I don't ground my Charge against the Pagans on the Surmises of their Poets. 'Twere unjust to make them responsible for all the Scandals they have fix'd on the Heathen Gods. They have turn'd 'em into ridicule a thousand humorous ways, sometimes disguising 'em in various Shapes, to accomplish the brutal Passions of Lust, Revenge, and Jealousy; sometimes representing 'em Eye-witnesses of a flagrant Adultery, in which one of their own Number surprizes the Goddess

* Nullam unquam rem defendisse quam non probarit, nullam oppugnasse quam non avertit. *Cic. de Oratore, l. 2.*

† *Ælian. Var. Hist. l. 3. c. 17.* || Quod Carneade argumtante, quid veri esset haud facile discerni posset. *Plin. l. 7. c. 30.*

his Wife; sometimes buffooning the limping Gate of the injur'd God, or the Mischance of the youthful *Hebe*, who fill'd out their Nectar, tumbling Heels upwards in a Posture, cou'd only tickle the loosest Fancy, and for which *Jupiter* turns her out of doors; not as he was scandaliz'd, for he's always a merry God, and relishes a smutty Jest as well as they, but for a pretence of taking in the beautiful *Ganymede*, to satisfy his unnatural Love: Sometimes representing 'em wounded in Duels with mortal Men; sometimes complaining of an ill Memory, or sweating at a knotty point: The Ground of that Fiction in *Lucian*, where *Jupiter* nonplus'd in an Assembly of the Gods, and past recollecting his own Harangue, runs it off in some fine Periods of *Demosthenes* against *Philip*, somewhat foreign indeed, but which he had formerly got by heart. I'm content we make no Judgment on such Authoritys, it being well known the Poets claim a Privilege of adulterating. And did we strictly examine our Christian Poets on all Subjects except Divine, we shou'd scarce find a Song, an Ode, or Epigram, not tinctur'd with Heresy, or Profaneness: So that we are oblig'd, for the Honor of the Christian Morality, not to condemn a Religion on the Representations of Poets. And wou'd their profane Poems were all the Grievance! The Mischief is, their Divine are often more injurious to the Gospel; their extravagant Sallys, mean Conceits, and ridiculous Fictions, instead of honoring the Blessed Virgin, and Saints in Paradise, as they imagine, exposing Religion to the Contempt and Raillerys of those without.

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SECT. CXXVI. *Mischiefs arising from Modern Poetry.*

POPE *Urban VIII.* who wrote a handsom Elegy which stands at the head of his Poems, exhorting the Poets his Brethren to Holy and Divine Composures, is to be commended. But he had done yet better, if instead of giving this Advice as a Poet, he had, in quality of Sovereign Pontiff, forbid all other Composures. And as he cou'd not exercise the same Power over all, as over one who inscrib'd him a Poem unbecoming a good Christian, whose Impudence he censur'd with such force, that the poor Man dy'd of Confusion; he shou'd have employ'd the awful Thunders of the Vatican to stop the Mischiefs arising from Poetry. The celebrated *Thuanus* * judiciously observes, that after the Death of *Harry II.* they who took the liberty of telling his Truths, or rather took a general review of all the Disorders of his Reign, reckon'd the swarms of Poets in his Court as none of the least; their mean Flatterys of the Dutcheſs of *Valentinois*, his Mistress; their Whims, which spoil'd the Taſt of young People, and took 'em off from ſolid Studys; and their ſoft and paſſionate Songs, which effac'd all impreſſions of Mo-

* Nec inter poſtrema corrupti ſeculi teſtimonia recenſebantur Poetæ Galli, quorum proventu regnum Henrici abundavit, qui ingenio ſuo abuſi per ſœdas adulationes ambitioſæ ſæminæ blandiebantur, juventute interim corruptâ, pueriſque a veris ſtudiis ita abductis, ac poſtremo ex virginum animis, pudore & verecundiâ, per laſcivarum cantionum illecebras eliminata. *Hiſt. l. 22. ad an. 1559.*

defty in the Hearts of tender Maids. You'l oblige me if you read the Passage in *Thuanus*; for I find my *French* won't come up to the majestic Beauty of his *Stile*. Mr. *de Mezeray* is of the same Mind, he says, † *Harry II. might be honor'd for his love of Letters, if the dissoluteness of his Court, authoriz'd by his Example, had not put the finest Wits on writing Romance, stuf'd with extravagant Visions, and wanton Poems, to court that Impurity which held the Prizes, and find Amusements for a Sex which maintains its Empire by toying.*

SECT. CXXVII. *The Publick Worship of the Pagans, and their respect for Tradition.*

LET's therefore take that Queen's * Advice, whose Honor *Virgil* has so unworthily sacrific'd, if not against Probability, at least against Truth. Let's quit the Poets, and hear the Historians. Let's examine the Pagan Religion in its Worship and Ceremonys, you shall find what I have said true to a tittle, and whatever I have rais'd your fancy to. Here we're to look for the true state of Idolatry, without regard to the Opinions of some Philosophers, who being too few to ground a just Exception, were besides restrain'd by the Fate of *Socrates* from rectifying the prevailing Errors. And as for the Men of Wit and good Sense, whose Notions of the Divinity, tho no Philosophers, might possibly be less absurd,

† Abreg. Chronol. ad an. 1559.

* Vos magis Historicis Lectores credite de me,
Quam qui furta deum concubitusque canunt
Falsidici vates temerant, qui carmine verum

Humanisque Deos assilant vitiis. *D.Dido apud Auson.*

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they go for nothing; because, as *Cicero* justly represents this set of Men in the Person of one of his Friends, they heard the Philosophers reason on the Nature of God with great pleasure; but when that was done they acted like the rest, and in the Worship and Ceremonys of Religion, follow'd not the Ideas of *Zeno*, *Cleanthes*, or *Chrysippus*, but pure Tradition, as instructed by the Priests and Augurs. † *When Religion's the Point* (thus *Cicero* makes one of his Friends speak) *I don't examine what Zeno, Cleanthes, or Chrysippus hold, but what the great Pontiffs say, Coruncanus, Scipio, and Scævola: And wou'd rather hear Augur Lælius discourse of Religion in his noble manner, than the top Philosopher of the Stoick Sect. 'Twas never my Principle to think meanly of any Article of the Roman Peoples Religion; and it's my fix'd Persuasion, that our Republick and Religion growing up together, the one must of necessity be approv'd by the Gods, or the other had ne'er become so powerful. I can hear a Philosopher explain the Reasons of Religion, but I believe our Forefathers without any Reason at all.*

What think you of this Thought, Sir? you dare not pronounce it absurd, as *Lactantius* * does, because it shews the Spirit of the Catholick Religion reign'd in *Rome* long before the Birth of

† Cum de religione agitur, T. Coruncanum, Scipionem, Scævolam Pontifices maximos, non Zenonem, aut Cleanthem, aut Chrysippum sequor; habeoque C. Lælium Augurem eundemque sapientem, quem potius audiam de religione dicentem in illa oratione nobili, quam quenquam principem Stoicorum
 A te Philosopho rationem accipere debeo Religionis, majoribus autem nostris etiam nullâ ratione credere.
Cicer. lib. 3. de nat. Deorum.

* *Divinar. Instit. l. 2. c. 6.*

JESUS CHRIST: For these are *Romans* who declare, They don't refuse to hear Philosophers reason, yet they'll hold implicitly to the Tradition of their Fathers. I'm overjoy'd we have such Antiquity to plead against our Calvinists, who appeal at every turn to Sense and Reason; whereas the Catholicks, even those Catholicks who are not distinguish'd by their Devotions, who fancy they discover Abuses, and that the Hereticks are not altogether in the wrong, come home to this Resolve at last, either in part or whole.

*'Tis best to keep the good old Ways,
Mind what your Parish-Parson says;
While none but giddy Fools pursue,
And crack their Brains with Doctrines new.*

*For me, an humble Sheep, I feed,
And follow as my Pastor's lead.
The love of Change is vile Excess,
Except of Women and of Dress.*

This is discreet Conduct, much like theirs, who after running down Physick and Physicians, the moment they fall sick, submit patiently to what the Doctor prescribes. † *We don't come into the World (says Mr. Balzac) to frame new Customs, but to obey the old, and take up with the ways of our Forefathers, as we do with their Earth and Sun. One wou'd think he stole the Thought from the Pagan Cecilius, who in a Dialogue of Minutius Felix, speaks*

† Balzac Entret. 37. Mr. Menage Observat. Sur Malherb. p. 566.

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thus : || Every thing in Nature being disputable, the best way is to hold by the Faith of our Forefathers as the Depositarys of Truth, to profess the Religion which Tradition teaches; adore the Gods whom our Fathers and Mothers accustom'd us to fear, before they instructed us in their perfect Knowledge; and decide nothing about the Divine Nature, but conform our selves to the first Men, who in the Infancy of the World had the honor of having Gods, either for Guardians or Kings. This Principle is so agreeable to popular Ideas, that soon or late the wisest fall into it. The Catholicks, who wou'd not hear it when urg'd by the Pagans against the Christian Religion, have long since adopted it against all Innovations: And 'tis at this day one of our strongest Arguments against the pretended Reform'd. These make a jest on't now, but time may come when they'll take it up in their turn, and plead it against their own Schismatics; perhaps they have already.

SECT. CXXVIII. *That we must judg of a Religion by the ordinary Worship. Reflexions on a Book of Mr. the Bishop of Condom.*

AS to my Position, That we must judg of the Pagan Religion, not from Impertinences of Poets, or fine Speculations of Philosophers, but

|| Cum igitur aut fortuna certa aut incerta natura sit, quanto venerabilius ac melius, Antistitem veritatis majorum excipere Disciplinam, religiones traditas colere, Deos quos a parentibus ante imbutus es timere, quam nosse familiarius, adorare? nec de numinibus ferre sententiam, sed prioribus credere, qui adhuc rudi seculo in ipsis mundi natalibus, meruerunt Deos vel faciles habere, vel Reges?

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the standing Worship countenanc'd by Publick Authority, I think it unexceptionable; for certainly this alone justifies or condemns a Religion: And 'twas on this Ground the Antient Fathers planted their whole Battery against Paganism. Even Mr. *de Condom*, who seems not to approve this Rule, who pretends we are to judge of the Catholick Religion only from Decisions of Councils, has yet * arraign'd the Pagan Religion upon Abuses in the ordinary Worship. He runs it down on account of its Mysteries, Feasts, Sacrifices, Holy Hymns, and Pictures, all referring to the Lives, Cruelties, and Jealousies of the Gods. He charges it with Prostitutions instituted in honor of the Goddess *Venus*; with Republicks and private Persons vowing her Courtizans in times of danger, and ascribing the preservation of their Country to such Devotions, as appears from a Picture hung up in the *Grecian* Temples after the defeat of *Xerxes* and his numerous Armies. The Piece represented the Vows and Processions of the prostitute Fair, with this Inscription by the famous *Simonides*; *These pray'd to the Goddess Venus, and she deliver'd Greece.* The same Mr. *de Condom* charges the Pagan Religion with consecrating the Scandals of the Theatre to its Gods, the bloody Spectacles of Gladiators; that is, with what can be imagin'd most corrupt and barbarous. He laughs at the Glosses and soft Touches the Philosophers gave, when prest with the Objections of Christians; nor spares the Jewish Religion, tho he owns the Errors insensibly in-

* *Discourse of Universal Hist. Part 2. Ch. 5.*

stil'd into that People, had not the Sanction of a publick Decree, as Tenets of the Synagogue.

He's very right; yet even this shews his own Method, for making the Catholick Religion look fair and inviting, utterly indefensible. What is't to us, say the Protestants, if all the Abuses and shocking Superstitions of the *Roman Church* are not to be found in the Decisions of Councils? As long as we see 'em publicly and solemnly authoriz'd, see 'em compose its Worship, we have ground enough to forbear its Communion. Might not the Pagans defend themselves the same way? Might not they alledg that the Charge against 'em, concern'd Abuses insensibly crept in by the connivance of the Magistrate, the Ignorance or Avarice of Priests? But it cou'd ne'er be prov'd the Colleges of Pontiffs, or Body of the Church duly assembled, had decreed these Points. The Pagans undoubtedly had offer'd these Excuses, if Masters of so much fine Sense as Mr. the Bishop of *Condom*. But how had they been answer'd? That 'twas a jest to make such a Defence; That a Man invited to settle in a Town, where Robbery, Murder, and all the ways of Violence were publicly suffer'd, on a pretence no Order for Killing or Stealing cou'd be found in the Registers of the Town-Hall, might well say they took him for a Fool. What is't to me, says he, whether there be an Order of the Magistrate for Murder and Rapine, or no? 'Tis enough they rob and slay here with Impunity, to keep me from ever settling among you. Hereticks, we must allow, may make the same Reply to Mr. the Bishop of *Condom*: and therefore the true and only way of disculpating our Religion, is to shew it tolerates

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nothing amiss; and not only that the Decisions of Councils are Orthodox, but the Worship also and Usages, and Tenets publicly authoriz'd, just and holy.

Thus argu'd our Doctor; adding, Tho a good Catholick, he'd impose no Conditions on the Pagan Religion, to which he wou'd not have the *Roman Church* submit; viz. to be judg'd in the Nature of each, by the Worship and Tenets publicly authoriz'd. And on this foot he concluded, That Atheists, consider'd with respect to the Understanding, are not in more enormous Errors than Gentiles. Which I shall speak to further in another place.

SECT. CXXIX. *Atheists and Idolaters compar'd in their Disposition of Heart.*

IF we consider Atheists by their Disposition of Heart, we find, that not restrain'd by the Fears of Divine Judgment, nor drawn by the Hopes of heavenly Favor, they must abandon themselves to whatever indulges their Passions. This is the worst we can say, having no Annals of any Atheist Nation: were there such, we might precisely tell to what Excesses a People may run, which have no God, whether much farther than those who have Gods innumerable. I think, till there is a faithful Account of the Manners, Laws, and Customs of a Nation professing no Religion, we may affirm, the Idolaters have gone as far in the foulest Crimes, as 'tis possible Atheists shou'd. We need only read *St. Paul's* * Catalogue of the Sins

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in which the Gentiles liv'd, to be convinc'd the rankest Atheists cou'd ne'er improve upon 'em. And if we consult profane History, and other Remains of Antiquity, we shall plainly see, That what the beastliest unnatural Impurity, boundless Ambition, black Spite and Envy, insatiable Avarice, savage Cruelty, and deepest Perfidiousness cou'd prompt the profest Atheist to, has been acted with a Vengeance by the antient Heathens, Worshippers of almost as many Divinities as there are Creatures.

SECT. CXXX. *That the wickedest Pagans were not Atheists.*

NOR can it be pretended, the Pagans, who committed these Crimes, were Atheists at heart: For we're to judg of them, as we do of Christians guilty in the same degree. 'Twere absurd to assert these acknowledg no God. It may be true of some; but it's notoriously false of the greater Number, as I shall evidently demonstrate e'er I quit this Point. Accordingly therefore, shou'd it be suppos'd a *Tarquin*, a *Catilin*, a *Caligula*, a *Nero*, a *Heliogabalus* own'd no God; yet 'twere absurd to say, all the other *Romans*, who were Murderers, Poisoners, Perjur'd, Slanderers, Adulterers, believ'd no Deity. Nay, 'twere unjust to think the cruel *Nero* an Atheist; since, as *Suetonius* informs us, he * durst not assist at the Mysterys of *Ceres*, because the Crier publish'd,

* Peregrinatione quidem Græciæ Eleusiniis sacris, quorum initiatione impii & scelerati voce præconis submoventur, interesse non ausus est. *Sueton. in Neron. c. 34.*

No impious or profligate Person shou'd presume to approach. An evident Proof of his Conscience of an All-seeing Justice, and his Persuasion of its being provok'd by the Contempt of Religious Ceremonys. *Suetonius* tells us in another place, * he was stung with Remorses of Conscience; That Dreams and evil Presages terrify'd his Soul: That † good Augurys inspir'd him with Joy, and that he thank'd Heaven for 'em: That tho || inconsistent to other Superstitions, he persever'd to the last in worshipping a small Image of an Infant, to which he sacrific'd thrice a day; and towards his latter End apply'd himself to inspecting the Intrails of Victims. He was therefore no Atheist. 'Twere easy to shew, *Tarquin*, *Catilin*, *Caligula*, and *Heliogabalus*, were as far from Atheism as he, seeing the First sent ** his Children to consult the Oracle of *Delphos* on a Prodigy which hapned in his Palace, and troubl'd him exceedingly. The Second consecrated a small Chappel in his House to a Silver Eagle, to which he paid the highest Devotions, †† especially when conspiring a Massacre. The Third, as already observ'd, endeavor'd to revenge the Uneasiness *Jupiter* gave him. And the Fourth was so fond of worshipping the God whose consecrated Priest he was, that he ||| remov'd the Sacred Utensils and Ornaments from all the antient Temples of *Rome* to one he erected to his own God; and intended to transfer thither the Rites of the *Jews*, *Samaritans*, and *Christians*, that his

* Cap. 46. † Cap. 41. || Cap. 56. ** Liv. l. 1. Dec. 1. †† Quam venerari ad cædem proficiscens solebas, à cujus altaribus sæpè istam dextram impiam ad necem civium transtulisti. *Cicer. Orat. 1. in Catilin.* ||| *Lampridius in ejus vita.*

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Worship might comprehend that of all other Divinitys. He assisted every Morning at the offering prodigious Numbers of Victims, * sacrific'd the beautifullest Children of *Italy*: And while the Magicians † butcher'd the tender Victims, he pray'd before his Idol, or pry'd into the Intrails of these Innocents, for Presages of his long Prosperity. This shews so plainly, the detestable Monster was no Atheist, that there's no need of drawing Presumptions from his Credulity, when he heard the Prediction of his dying a violent Death. Now if *Nero, Tarquin, Catilin, Caligula, Heliogabalus*, were no Atheists, what ground for imagining other wicked Pagans had no Sense of Religion? Shou'd not we laugh at him, who deny'd that the Persecutors of the Saints were not the most abandon'd to all the Excesses of Paganism? And were it not altogether as ridiculous, to pretend the Citys and *Roman* Provinces which worried the first Christians with so much Cruelty, were void of all Religion? since 'tis incontestable the Fury of these Idolaters proceeded, 1. From their Zeal in the Worship of the Gods, against whom they saw the Christians bend their growing Power. 2. From a false, tho firm Persuasion, that the Christians contempt of their Gods was the Cause of all the publick Calamitys.

* See Coeffetau's *Rom. Hist.* l. 14. † Omne denique Mago-
rum genus aderat illi, operabaturque quotidie, hortante illo &
gracias agente, quod amicos eorum invenisset, cum inspiceret
extra puerilia, & inspiceret Hostias ad ritum Gentilem suum.
Lamprid. Heliogab.

SECT. CXXXI. *Effects of the Knowledge of
God in Idolatrous Nations.*

LET's therefore join in this, That where the Heart is not truly converted to God, and sanctify'd by the Graces of the Holy Spirit, the Knowledge of God, and of a Providence, is too loose a Rein for the Passions; and consequently that they fly out to as much Licentiousness as in a State of utter Ignorance. All, this Knowledge is able to bring forth, amounts to some outward Exercises only, esteem'd sufficient to work a Reconciliation with God. It may move 'em to build Temples, slay Victims, offer up Prayers, or do something of this kind; but not break off the smallest Amour, make restitution of ill-gotten Riches, or mortify the Appetites. So that Concupiscence, the Source of all Transgression, reigning absolutely in the Heart of Idolaters as well as Atheists, those are as likely to run into all Excesses as these; and both incapable of forming Civil Societys, unless there be a stronger curb than Religion, to wit, human Laws, to manage their Untowardness. This shews how little ground we have to think, a loose confus'd Notion of Providence serves for correcting the pravity of human Will. This is not the part on which it operates: Its Influences are rather Physical than Moral; it tends to fix Men to the Free-hold, make 'em of a piece with their City-Walls, and struggle lustily if these be attack'd; but renders 'em neither Wise nor Vertuous. It's well known, what Impressions this Thought makes on Peoples Minds; that they fight for their Temples, and Altars, and Household-Gods, *pro aris &*

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focis; how cheerful and daring he goes forth, who's possess'd with an Assurance of Victory in the Cause of his Gods; how animated by his natural Prejudices to the Enemys of his Religion. This is all a false Religion contributes to the Well-being of States and Commonwealths. There's only one Holy Religion which comprehends this publick Good, in that of converting the Heart to God; which enables Men to resist their Passions, and renders 'em truly Vertuous. Even this do's not take place on all who outwardly profess it. For the greatest Part persist so obstinately in their Vices, that did not human Laws provide a Remedy, all Christian Societys must quickly disband. And I'm positive, such a Town as *Paris*, depriv'd of all other Remedy against our Passions besides the Remonstrances of Preachers and Confessors, wou'd be in the most deplorable Case in a Fortnight, unless preserv'd by a Course of Miracles. And now insist, Sir, that an airy Notion of the Existence of a God, is of mighty Efficacy for subduing Sin: Or rather, assure your self, this degree of Faith gives Idolaters no preference to Atheists, only as it tends to the Security of the State. For, with submission to *Cardan* *, a Society of Atheists, as they're incapable of Motives from Religion to work up their Courage, wou'd be much easier destroy'd than a Society of Men who worship'd the Gods: And tho he has some reason to say, the Belief of the Immortality of the Soul † has done much mischief in the World,

* Lib. de Immort. animæ:

† ————— Summus utrinque
Inde furor vulgo quod numina vicinorum
Odit uterque locus ————— &c. *Juv. Sat. 15.*

by kindling Religious Wars in all Ages; yet 'tis false judging only by politick Views, that it has done more hurt than good, as he'd make us believe.

SECT. CXXXII. *That Idolaters have outdone Atheists in the Point of High-Treason against the Divine Majesty.*

BUT if Idolaters have only equal'd Atheists in most other Crimes, 'tis certain they have outdone 'em in that of High-Treason against the Gods. For beside bare Words, and a way of speaking blasphemously against the Divinity, which we find in their Writings, without finding the Authors ever call'd to account; which we find, I say, very common*, not only in Poetical Writings, but in plain Prose: Is it not well known the Pagans depos'd their Divinitys, when they were dissatisfy'd with 'em? Is it not known they ras'd their Temples, and ston'd their Images? *Alexander*, who in his early Youth was so prodigal of Incense, that his Governor was oblig'd to chide him, and whose weak side, as *Q. Curtius* informs, was Superstition; was so enrag'd at their letting *Ephestion* die, that not content with Blaspheming their Names, he had their Temples demolish'd, their Altars level'd; and turning his Rage chiefly against *Esculapius*, order'd † his Temple to be laid in Ashes. *Augustus*, who extended his Devotions even to his newly-murder'd Uncle,

* Vide Muret. Orat. 4. l. 2. † Arrian. l. 7. c. 3.

and who in one day had Three hundred Persons of Quality sacrific'd to this late assassinated God, was not content, after the loss of his Fleet in a violent Storm, to swear, *he'd conquer in spite of Neptune*; but forbad this Sea-God's Image to be carry'd in Procession, at the approaching Solemnity of the *Circensian Games*. *Suetonius*, who writes this, tells us in another place, That the day *Germanicus* dy'd, the People pull'd down the Temples, overthrew the Altars, and some toss'd their Household-Gods out at the Windows.

The People of *Japan* * have a Custom at this day not unlike this, for they have 365 Idols appointed Guardians to the Emperor's Person, which they place Centry one after another, so that each is upon Duty one whole Day in the Year. If the Prince comes by any mischance, they fall foul on the Idol of the Day; they whip or bastinate him, and expel him the Palace for a hundred Days. When the *Chinese* consult their Idols on the Success of an Affair (which they do by casting two equal Sections of a small Globe, run thro with a Thred, at the Idol's Feet, and repeating some Prayers aloud) and don't find the Lot favorable, they content themselves for the first time † with calling their God a thousand Names: Then changing their Note, address him as many Prayers, and cast the Lot a second Time. If it do's not come up as they desire, they give him the Whip or Bastinate, together with ill Language; and the God is drag'd thro Fire and Water. After this come new Supplications: And so they scourge and adore their

* *The Embassy of the Dutch East-India Company.* † *Maffei Hist. Indicar. lib. 6.*

Idol by turns, till both pieces of the Bowl fall on the side they desire.

I find another crying Impiety among the Pagans, their translating among the Gods, Persons not fit to live upon Earth: as *Drusilla*, whose incestuous Familiarity with her Brother *Caligula*, was notorious to all the World; *Antinous*, the Emperor *Adrian's* *Ganymede*, who had Divine Honors paid him, not only in this Emperor's life-time, but for 200 Years after; and the two *Faustina's*, Mother and Daughter, one the Wife of *Antonin*, the other of *Marcus Aurelius*, both so excessively leud, that the whole Town was scandaliz'd, especially at the Daughter's unpardonably prostituting her self to a Gladiator, when she had the worthiest Man alive to her Husband. Yet all was no Obstacle to the Peoples honoring the two Ladys as Goddesses after their Death, by an Impiety, with which the Emperor *Julian* * reproaches *Marcus Aurelius* smartly enough. The Ceremonys by which the *Athenians* paid *Demetrius* † Divine Honors, tho the most infamous Debauchee in Nature, exceed all imagination.

These are Crimes of which Atheists are not guilty, and Idolaters are. And of what dye are such Crimes in your mind? The blackest can be conceiv'd, the most dishonorable to the Divine Nature. For in short, causing the Temple of a God to be demolish'd, because he has let such a one die, is it not supposing the Divinity upon his good Behavior, and responsible for his Actions before Men; That he is not to act according to his

* In *Cæsaribus*. † *Plutarch. in Demetr. Clemens Alexandr. in Protepr. ad Gentes.*

own Will, but according to the good Pleasure of Man: That if he acts otherwise, Man has a right to correct him, by forbidding his usual Honors; as a Prince punishes his Servants by depriving 'em of their Posts? Is not this charging the Divinity with Injustice, and thinking he may be affronted without redress? In a word, is not this carrying the Contempt and Treason higher than ever Atheists did? An Atheist pays no Homage, because not persuaded of the Being of a God. If he destroys a Temple, he thinks it offends no Divinity. But an Idolater, who do's the same, refuses Honors to a God he believes in, and refuses purely to affront him. It is not so ignominious to be deny'd the Privilege of Access, * as to be thrust out after you are once admitted: The Idolater therefore, who destroys those Altars on which he has offer'd Sacrifice, sins more heinously than the Atheist.

I desire your Opinion on this Case. Let's suppose two Frenchmen, one who owns neither *Lewis* the XIV. nor any body besides for King: The other, who forgetting his Duty to the Great Prince God has given us, transfers his Allegiance to some mean Person. Which of the two affronts the King most? The latter undoubtedly. For refusing Obedience to your Lawful Governor, is only the first Step in Rebellion; but 'tis the height of Treason to set up another in his place: And the meaner the Person, the greater the Offence against the Rightful Prince. A King, dethron'd by his Subjects, only to make way for a Commonwealth, is less affronted, than if they chuse another in his

* *Turpius ejicitur quam non admittitur hospes.*

room ; for in the second Instance they acknowledg they're acted not by their aversion to Monarchy, but from a personal dislike to their Sovereign. We may easily understand by these Reflections, That Idolaters, who substitute innumerable chimerical Divinities in the place of the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, are more injurious to his Honor than downright Atheists.

If to this you add the Remarks under the Fifth Head of Argument, and consider that the *Apotheoses* of infamous Men and Women contain the like or greater Enormitys, you'll no longer doubt that Pagan Idolatry was worse than Atheism.

Nay, I don't know but I shou'd do well in desiring you to add one Consideration more to the rest ; which is, That it appears by all the Oracles of the antient Heathens, that the Devil never design'd to run Men into Atheism, but on the contrary try'd all his Skill to rivet Idolatry in their Hearts. When the Question is concerning the Degrees or Nature of Sin, the Devil, I presume, is no incompetent Judg ; of all the Creatures he has the best Talent this way. It's likely then Idolatry is more criminal than Atheism, seeing this Evil Spirit gives that the Preference. I shou'd account this Argument demonstrative, were it not for the Reason given, I remember, for this Preference in another place *.

What remains of our Excellent Person's Reasonings, which I have so far given with a kind of Comment, is too considerable and too knotty, to go on before I draw breath. I shall therefore take some Rest in this place.

July 9. 1681.

* Before, Sect. 113.

SECT. CXXXIII. VII Reason: *Atheism do's not necessarily lead to a Corruption of Manners.*

I'M at you again, Sir, and begin, by telling you that the Reason on which our Doctor insisted most, was this: What induces us to believe Atheism the most fearful State, is only a common Prejudice concerning the Dictates of Conscience, taken to be the Rule of Human Actions, merely for want of examining their true Springs. For thus the World argues: Man is naturally a reasonable Agent; he never wills without knowing; he's necessarily determin'd to a desire of Happiness, and an aversion to Misery, and to preferring the Means which seem properest for these Ends. If then he's convinc'd there's a Providence ruling the World, from whom nothing is hid, which recompenses the Vertuous with endless Felicity, and the Wicked with everlasting Pains; he can't avoid following the Ways of Vertue, and forsaking Vice, and renouncing his carnal Lusts, which he's perswaded will retribute in never-ceasing Woes for a few Moments pleasure; whereas his denying these transitory Pleasures shall be attended with eternal Enjoyments. But if ignorant of a Providence, he considers these Pleasures as his chief End, and Rule of all his Actions; he makes a Jest of what others call Honor and Vertue; he's sway'd by every Motion of Concupiscence; he gets rid of those whose Discourses are uneasy; perjures himself for a trifle; and if he climbs to a Post which sets him above Human Laws, as he's already above Remorse, there's no Crime he'll stick at. He's a Monster infinitely more dangerous
† than

than the wild Beasts, Lions and furious Bulls, of which *Hercules* deliver'd *Greece*. One who has no regard for Man, is yet restrain'd by the Fear of his * Gods. Thus the Passions of Men have been always kept at bay: And certain it is, many heinous Crimes have been prevented, by preserving the Remembrance of several remarkable Judgments on the Wicked, and ascribing 'em to their Impietys, or inventing signal Cases, such as that given out in *Augustus's* Time, on occasion † of pillaging a Temple in *Asia* by *Mark Anthony's* Soldiers. 'Twas confidently said, he who first laid hands on the Goddesses Image, was suddenly struck blind, and seiz'd with a Palsy in every Nerve. *Augustus* desiring to be satisfy'd of the Fact, was inform'd by an old Officer who fram'd the Story, not only that the Fellow was perfectly in good health, but had liv'd happily ever after on the Spoil of that Temple. Such likewise was the Notion, That they who after fair Warning durst set Foot in a Temple of *Arcadia* dedicated to *Jupiter*, shou'd lose their || Shadow ever after. In all probability the Story of the sudden Death of an Ambassador from the *Latins*, who in full Senate spake irreverently of the *Jupiter* of the *Romans*, was such another pious Fraud: ||| *Livy* speaks not positively one way or other, because he found Authors divided upon it. Things true or false of this kind, which have an excellent Effect on Idolaters, have none at all upon the Atheist: So that not to be

* Si genus humanum & mortalia temnitis arma,
At sperate Deos memores fandi atque nefandi.

† Mr. Balzac Entret. 34. c. 3. || Theopomp. apud Polyb.

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taken by any of these Considerations, he must o'course be the arrantest and most incorrigible Villain in Nature.

SECT. CXXXIV. *Experience overthrows all Reasonings tending to prove, that the Sense of a God corrects the vicious Inclinations of Men.*

THIS is all very fine and right, when one considers things in their Ideas and Metaphysical Abstractions. But the Mischief is, it falls not in with Experience. I own if People of another World were left to guess at the Manners of Christians, and barely inform'd they're Creatures endu'd with Reason and good Sense, thirsting after Happiness, persuaded there's a Paradise for those who obey the Divine Law, and a Hell for such as transgress it: they of another World cou'd not doubt that Christians vy'd continually in fulfilling the Precepts of the Gospel; that the strife among 'em was only who shou'd most excel in Works of Mercy, in Prayer, in Forgiveness of Injurys, if possible any among 'em cou'd be capable of offering any. But whence shou'd so favorable a Judgment proceed? From their considering a Christian by the neat Idea only: for might they consider him in the gross, and by every blind side, they'd soon retract their good Opinion; and, did they see only one Fortnight's way of the World, declare the People here did not walk according to the light of their Conscience.

SECT. CXXXV. *Why there's such a difference between Faith and Practice.*

HERE's the true way of unfolding the Mystery. When one compares the Practice of a Man pretending to Religion, with the general Idea conceiv'd of such a Man's Manners, 'tis surprising not to find the least Conformity between 'em. The general Idea represents a Man, who, believing a God, a Heaven, and a Hell, cleaves to what he knows most pleasing to him, and shuns what he thinks displeasing. But the Man's Life shews, he takes the quite contrary Cause. Wou'd you know the Cause of this Contradiction? 'tis this; The Person is not determin'd to one Action rather than another, by the general Notices of Right or Wrong, but by his private Judgment on the matter of the present Action. Now this private Judgment may happen to suite with the general Ideas of his Duty, but for the most part 'tis otherwise. He almost always follows the reigning Passion of his Soul, the Bias of his Constitution, the Force of inveterate Habits, and his Taste and Tenderness for some Objects more than others. The Poet who makes *Medea* say, * *I see and approve the Good, but the Evil I do*, represents the difference exactly, between the light of Conscience, and the particular Judgment determining our Practice. Conscience has a general Sight of the Beauty of Vertue, and forces us to confess, nothing's so praise-worthy as upright ways. But when the Heart is once inflam'd with unlawful Love, and one finds by satisfying

* *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* *Ovid. Met. l. 7.*
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this Love he shall tast of Pleasure, and by denying it throw himself into melancholy and restless Thoughts; no calls of Conscience sway, he consults his Passion only, and is determin'd to act *hic & nunc* against his general Idea of Duty. Which shews nothing is a greater Illusion, than judging of the Manners of Men from the general Opinions they have imbib'd. This is worse than judging of a Man by his Discourses or printed Works, which are but poor Pledges of an Author's Sentiments. For what can be graver than *Sallust's* Invectives against the Corruptions of his Age? The severest Guardians of antient Discipline can't out-talk him. Yet *Sallust* was no Saint; the Censor thought fit to take notice of his dissolute Life in full Senate: He was twice accus'd of Adultery *; and being taken in the Fact by *Milo*, did not get off under a round Sum of Mony, and a good lashing into the Bargain. Had we *Clodius's* Oration to the Senate, bewailing the Profanation of holy Things, we shou'd certainly find in't great Signs of profound Piety, and many of those Figures of Rhetorick which set forth the Atrocity of an Action with most Life. Yet *Clodius* was nothing less than a Zealot. He † made his Boasts, he had been blown up by two hundred several Votes of the Senate, for so many Contempts of Religion; and he profan'd the Mysterys of the good Goddess with an amazing Impudence.

* A. Gell. Noct. Att. l. 16. c. 18. † Cic. de Arusp. Respons.

SECT. CXXXVI. *That Man does not act by his Principles.*

YOU may call Man a reasonable Creature, as long as you please: still it's true, he hardly ever acts by fixt Principles. In matters of Speculation, he's so far Master as not to infer wrong Consequences; for here he errs much more thro a Facility in admitting Principles which are false, than in drawing false Conclusions. But the Case is quite otherwise, where the Question is concerning Morality. Giving seldom or never into false Principles, his Conscience ever retaining the Ideas of natural Equity, he yet almost always turns in favor of his inordinate Affections. How comes it, pray Sir, tho there's so prodigious a Diversity of Opinions concerning the manner of serving God, and the Forms of Civil Life; yet one finds the same Passions reign eternally in all Countrys, and in all Ages? That Ambition, Avarice, Envy, Lust, Revenge, and all the Crimes consequent on these Passions, are so rife all the World over? That the Jew and Mahometan, Turk and Moor, the Christian and Infidel, Tartar and Indian, the Inhabitants on the Continent and those of the Isles, the Nobleman and Yeoman, all kinds of Men, who differ in almost all things else, except the general Notion of Humanity, shou'd so exactly agree with regard to these Passions, one wou'd think they copy'd one from t'other? Whence can this proceed, but from hence, That the true Principle of Man's Actions (I except those in whom the Grace of the Holy Spirit operates efficaciously) is nothing else than the Complexion,

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plexion, the natural Inclination for Pleasure, a taste for particular Objects, a desire of pleasing others, the Turn given us by conversing with one set of Acquaintance, or some other Disposition resulting from the Ground of our corrupt Nature, whatever Country we are born, or whatever Principles bred in?

This must be the Case, or the antient Pagans, who were under the Yoke of numberless Superstitions, continually employ'd in appeasing the Anger of their Idols, aw'd by infinite Prodigys, and firmly persuaded the Gods dispens'd Good or Evil according to the Life they led, had been restrain'd from all the abominable Crimes they committed. Were it otherwise, how is't possible, that Christians so clearly instructed from Revelation, supported by so many Miracles, that they must renounce their Sins in order to be eternally happy, and to prevent eternal Misery; who have so many excellent Preachers paid for making the liveliest and most pathetick Exhortations on this Head, so many zealous and skilful Directors of Conscience, so many Manuals of Devotion, shou'd yet live as they do, in the most enormous ways of Sin and Disobedience?

SECT. CXXXVII. *Why certain Ceremonys are regularly observ'd.*

INDEED the Opinions on the Article of Religion and Civil Life, are the Principle of certain Customs regularly observ'd among People of the same Faith, whatever part of the World they are in, and among Persons of the same Nation, of how different Sentiments soever in other respects.

We see the Jews, for example, circumcise their Children, and observe the Sabbath in all parts of the World where they are tolerated. The *Persians*, in antient times, approv'd incestuous Marriages, and concluded 'em without scruple, not only at home in *Persia*, but even while they sojourned and multiply'd in foreign Countrys, where Marriages of this kind were detestable. Those, on the other hand, of a Nation which condemn'd Incest, ne'er made such Marriages, not even when dwelling in *Persia*, and familiarly acquainted with all the Customs of the Country. And the *Persians* themselves, who embrac'd the Religion of JESUS CHRIST, were no longer capable of these unlawful Alliances. * *Bardefanes*, in his fine Treatise against the Astrologers, turns this Consideration upon the Judicial Art, and 'tis certainly a good Argument against it.

But all this destroys not my Position. It only shews, Men conform to the Rules of Religion, when they may without much Uneasiness, and where a Contempt of these Rules is of ill Consequence to their present Interest. This is the Reason of the Jews observing their Feasts and Ceremonys. The circumcising an Infant is no Pain to Father or Mother, nor dangerous to the Child. It does not hinder their heaping up Wealth by all kind of Fraud, by Lying, Slandering, Whoring or Drunkenness, if given this way. And shou'd a Jew be so bold, as to neglect the Ceremony of Circumcision, he's sure to be excommunicated, and accounted a Monster by all his Nation. We may say the same of their observing

* Apud Euseb. Præp. Evangel. l. 6. c. 8.

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Feasts: They who neglect 'em, are their own Tormentors, not only as incurring Censure, Reproach, or Fines, if this may be, but as they deny themselves the sweetest part of Life. For the Passions are so ingenious at making Reprizals, that they find matter of Enjoyment in the very Things design'd for their Mortification. What can be prettier than a Festival? Every one quits his Labor, puts on his best Clothes, dances, games, drinks, both Sexes come together; for one hour or two bestow'd upon God, they bestow ten or twelve upon themselves. Isn't this now a mighty Victory Religion gains over the Passions, to get Circumcision and Festivals observ'd?

As to the Fasts and Abstinences of the Church, I own it's not so easy to submit to these, as to the observance of Feast-Days; yet they are kept. But this undoubtedly happens, either because they may be observ'd without prejudice to a darling Passion, or because by little and little People find out the Secret of eluding the Uneasiness, or won't be thought irreligious, which is often fatal to Mens Interests in this Life. They abstain a whole Lent from Flesh-Meat; yes, but do they abstain from Evil-speaking? do they abstain from unlawful Game, from the Company of idle Women, from Revenge? No, every one lives this Season as he did before, except that he goes oftner to Sermons, and instead of making two large Meals a Day, and eating Beef and Mutton, takes up with so much other Victuals at Noon, that a small Collation may serve at Night. Thus they fast, who find no great trouble in flinting the Stomach: they who do, have recourse to the Confessor's Indulgence for a Liberty of Discretion. And after

all, there's hardly a young Girl, who to preserve a fine Shape, or save something to buy clean Gloves, won't fast out a Lent more cheerfully, than the best of 'em out of a Principle of Obedience to the Church.

Let's hold then to our Maxim, and fairly own, That if Men observe several Ceremonys out of a Principle of Religion, 'tis because they don't interrupt the prevailing Passion of their Soul, or because the Danger of Infamy or some temporal Punishment constrains. Or rather, if they submit to hard and painful Discipline, 'tis that they wou'd barter for habitual Sins, and reconcile Conscience to the darling Passion; which still shews, the Corruption of their Will is the grand Principle of their Devotions.

I don't think it strange there are no incestuous Marriages in Countrys branding 'em with a publick Horror and Infamy; for where's the Man whom such a Barrier does not secure in his Duty, provided he's not of a Country which has other Thoughts of the matter, and thinks not, as the *Persians* probably did, that all but they have false Notions of Civil Life? But to judg, whether Christians avoid Marriages of this kind, because God prohibits 'em, we ought to know their Minds in case the Civil or Common Law shou'd leave 'em at full liberty; for, as Matters now stand, I don't see how one can plead any Merit in not marrying his Sister. There are sad temporal Punishments enough against this Disorder, to prevent it, tho Conscience were not concern'd. If the Civil or Canon Law left Men at liberty, 'tis probable they'd have no more scruple in this point than in that of Adultery, of which so many are guilty,

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SECT. CXXXVIII. *An Example shewing Mens Opinions are not the Rule of their Actions.*

'TWERE endless answering all the Objections which may be rais'd against this Doctrine: for the Mind of Man being subject to infinite Caprice and Variety, no Rule can be laid down concerning it, not liable to a thousand Exceptions. The safest is that which is for the most part true, to wit, *That Man is not determin'd in his Actions by general Notices, or Views of his Understanding, but by the present reigning Passion of his Heart.* Upon the whole, did a drunken debauch'd Christian refrain stealing, because he knows God forbids Theft; wou'd he not refrain the two other Sins, since he knows they're equally forbid? And seeing he forbears only one of the three, is it not because he fears the Infamy or Punishment, or is not of a covetous Principle; or in general, that the turn of his Fancy finds no Charms in Thieving? To conclude, if Conscience were the Cause determining Mens Actions, cou'd Christians live such wretched Lives?

SECT. CXXXIX. *We can't say, they who do not live by the Principles of Religion believe no God.*

I. An Argument in this Point drawn from the Lives of Soldiers.

THESE's no replying, That Christians, who don't walk according to the Principles of their Religion, disbelieve our Mysterys, and are so many conceal'd Atheists. For beside that this were multiplying Atheists terribly, against the sense of many famous Authors, who won't allow there ever was a thorow Atheist in the World; who dare call all our Soldiers Atheists, who yet will commit strange Disorders unless kept under severe Discipline? The Doubts of the Existence of a God never enter into such Souls: This is not the common Peoples blind side; they han't Wit enough to be amus'd by Atheistical Subtiltys: * Bread and *May-Fair*'s the top of their Ambition: They have not the vanity of being thought wiser than the rest of the World, by advancing that the belief of a Supreme Being is a vulgar Error. They who run into Deism, or Doubts of this kind, set up we know for Top-Wits, and call themselves by way of Excellency *Esprits Forts*. Their pretension, I'll promise 'em, is ill founded; and 'twere easy to shew, nothing's weaker, or more silly than their strain of Wit. However, this sort of Men for the most part value themselves on the Mind more than the Body; whereas

* Panem & Circenses. *Juv. Sat. 10.*

your Soldiers and Highway-men think only of their Body, and are wicked, if I may say so, only by this part of 'em.

Besides, it's certain, Soldiers who breathe only Blood and Slaughter, and who under the least slack hand will ravage Friends and Foes alike, are very susceptible of religious Zeal : for let 'em loose on those of a different Religion, and raise 'em by this mighty Motive, their Courage will quickly turn to Fury, and all their Violences be so many meritorious Acts in their own Eyes. They have an implacable Hatred to those of a different Sect, and wou'd not for the World be seen at Prayers with 'em. A strong Argument they don't renounce Christianity when they commit the greatest Crimes !

SECT. CXL. II Proof, *drawn from the Disorders committed in the Crusades.*

WILL any one presume to say, That the Christians, who list'd in the Crusades to the Holy Land, had no Religion ; they who quitted their Country to make War upon Infidels ; they who saw Angels and Saints fighting at the head of their Armys, and putting their Enemys to flight ; they who talk'd of nothing but Prodigys and Miracles ? A Man must forfeit common Sense who suspects such men of Atheism : and yet they committed the horriblest Villanys ever heard of ; so that the Christians, to whose defence they came, dreaded 'em as much as Turks or Saracens. By one View the Crusades are undoubtedly a bright Scene in Christianity ; yet there's a Reverse not the most honorable. For here we see the

the Christians of the East guilty of the blackest deepest Treachery, to destroy the Christians of the West who came to their Relief; those on the other hand repaying 'em in the terriblest Ravages. Take this with you, good Sir, That I don't pretend to deny, tho the Crusades were Works of pure Devotion, that many Atheists might ingage in 'em, either out of Vain-glory, or for fear of being branded with Cowardice or Irreligion, or out of a Martial Spirit, or Curiosity, or Ambition, or merely to commit a thousand Disorders. I'm perswaded one may submit to all the Exercises of outward Devotion, how painful soever, from a Principle of mere Self-love. This I say then, That the generality of the Crusade were Men spirited to the Enterprize by Preaching and Indulgences; and who did not formally renounce Religion, when abandon'd to those Excesses.

SECT. CXLI. *Reflections on a Charge of certain Infidels, that the Principles of the Christian Religion lead to Cowardice.*

IN speaking of the Licentiousness of our Soldierry, and Wickedness of the Crusades in the face of Infidel Nations, I can't but call to mind an old Charge against Christianity; That the Principles of the Gospel are not fitted for the preservation of the publick Safety of a State, because they emasculate the Mind, and inspire a Horror for Bloodshed, and all the Violences of War. I don't examine whether this Objection be as despicable as some wou'd make it; but only say, there can't be a worse Defence than appealing to Experience, and shewing from this Topick, that no Nations

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are more warlike than those professing Christianity. This is a poor Answer, because it only shews that Christians don't act up to their Principles; whereas the proper Defence here, is to evince from the Spirit and Tendency of the Christian Religion, that Christians ought to be better Soldiers than other Men. But can any one in good Reason assert this? Must not we own that the Courage inspir'd by the Gospel is not that of Murder and Violence, such as War requires; but that of despising Shame and Poverty, Persecution, Prisons, Whip, Wheel, and all the Instruments of Martyrdom? 'Tis fitted to endue us with an heroick Patience, to out-brave the most inhuman rage of persecuting Tyrants, to make us resign'd to the Will of God under the acutest Diseases. Here's the true Christian Courage. This, I own, suffices to convince Infidels, that our Religion does not enervate the Mind, or beget a dastardly Spirit; but hinders not their insisting with good Reason, that the Gospel inspires no Courage in the common notion of the Word. By a Man of Courage, the World understands one extremely nice in the Point of Honor, who can't bear the least Affront, who revenges, swift as Lightning, and at the hazard of his Life, the least disrespect; who loves the smell of Gunpowder; who goes on the most desperate Attacks, to imbrue his hands in the Blood of his Enemys; who has a Principle of Ambition, and wou'd be at the top of the World. A Man must be out of his Wits to say, the Counsels or Precepts of JESUS CHRIST bestow this Spirit; for it's plain to those who know only the first Elements of Christianity, that it presses nothing more than bearing Injurys, being meek

meek and humble, loving our Neighbour, seeking Peace with all, rendring Good for Evil, and avoiding even a look of Rage and Violence. I defy all the Officers in the World, be they ever so expert in military Discipline, to make good Soldiers on such Maxims as these. The most they can bring 'em to, is not fearing to die for God and their Country. But I appeal to those who understand the Art of War, if this be a sufficient Qualification for a Soldier; and if to excel in this Mystery, he ben't oblig'd to do his Enemy all the Mischief he can, prevent, surprize, put him to the Sword, burn his Magazines, starve and sack him. One shou'd do mighty things with Men whose Consciences were burden'd with Scruples, who needed a Casuist at every turn, to know if in the present Circumstances 'twere lawful to kill a Man, execute a cruel Order, set fire to a Village, strip the Peasants, &c. Marechal Biron wou'd be finely fitted with such an Army; He who broke one of his Captains, because he took some Precautions for fear of the King's Attorney-General. *Are you one of those,* says he, *who study the Law? I cashier you; You shall never serve me more: That Soldier who fears a Quill, will fear a Sword.* Were the Principles of Christianity justly pursu'd, there wou'd be no such thing as a Conqueror among Christians, no offensive Arms; the most wou'd be defensive against the Invasions of Infidels. In such a case, how many Nations of Christendom might have enjoy'd Ages of profound Peace, and consequently been at this time the most unfit for War? It's certain therefore, the Spirit of our Holy Religion does not make us Warlike, and yet there are not on Earth Nations so warlike as those professing

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nessing Christianity. Except me only the *Turk*, and chuse thro *Africa*, *Asia*, or *America*, where you please, an Army of a hundred thousand Men, we'll desire only ten or twelve thousand Christians to drive 'em into the Sea. The *Turks* themselves come far short of the Christians, and never got ground of 'em by equal Numbers. Avarice, Leudness, Insolence and Cruelty, which render Armys formidable, reign in the Christian Armys as much as others; they don't indeed eat the Flesh of their Enemys, as some Nations of *America* do. 'Tis the Christian improves the Art of War daily, by inventing infinite Machines for making Sieges more terrible and bloody; and 'tis from us the Infidels learn the use of the best Arms. I know we don't excel in this kind, as Christians, but as we have better Heads than they; for had they more Skill and Courage, they'd infallibly make War better. However, I draw a convincing Proof from hence, That the Principles of Religion are little pursu'd in the World, since I make appear that Christians employ their utmost Skill, and all their Passions, to perfect the Art of War, without the Gospel's traversing the cruel Design in the least.

Let's resume our Subject, and demonstrate from other Examples, that inordinate Courses are no Argument of Atheism.

SECT. CXLII. III Proof, drawn from the Conduct of Women.

WHO dare pretend, that all the Christian Ladys, distinguish'd by their Vices, have no sense of Religion? 'Twere the falsest Notion

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in the World; Atheism is not the Womens Sin. The Church rather supposes Devotion their peculiar Inheritance, seeing its ordinary Prayer is, *pro devoto famineo sexu*. 'Tis thought a Vertue with them not to meddle in high Points; so they stick by their Catechise, and are all of the Mother's Religion, much more inclin'd to Superstition than Profaneness, running after Sermons and Indulgences, and so taken up with a thousand petty Passions peculiar to 'em, that they have neither leisure nor capacity to call the Faith in question, unless engag'd in a persecuted Religion, unable to afford a thousand things they have a mind for, and which the prevailing Religion freely enjoys. In this case their Doubts are sometimes so violent, they turn, not from Religion to Atheism, but from one Religion to another; otherwise little subject to Apostacy. You see 'em solicitous to gain the Jubilees, constant at Mass, free to undertake Pilgrimages. I well know what's said in Raillery, that Religion's only the Pretence; and a Passion for gadding and gossiping, the true Cause; to see and be seen, or it may be divert with a Galant. But I know too, we must not take all this Raillery for Gospel; it pushes the thing too far: Such Practices may be carry'd on now and then, especially in jealous Countrys. But in *France*, where Women are on their Parole, where they visit at all Hours, and whom they please, and receive Visits as oft as they think fit, 'tis false that they go to gain Indulgences only for a pretence of rambling. Once more then, Irreligion is by no means the female Sexes Vice; yet many of the Sex are exceeding corrupt in their Manners, either thro Vanity, or Envy, or Backbiting, or Covetousness, or Gallantry, or all these Passions together.

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'Tis well known, all great Citys are full of leud Houses; that especially, in which we believe God has fix'd the holy Apostolick See, is struck thro with the stain of Uncleanness. The number of Matrons there, who make Traffick of the first Favour of their Daughters or Nieces, is not inconsiderable. I have read in an Account Mr. *de St. Didier*, Gentleman to Count *d' Avaux*, has given of *Venice*, where this Count was sometime Embassador, that the Practice is so common there, *That of ten * young Women who turn Prostitutes, nine are set to sale by the Mothers or Aunts, who chaffer about the price of the Maidenhead for such a time, sometimes for a hundred, sometimes two hundred Ducats, to lay by, say they, a Spill to marry 'em off.* He relates very agreeably, *That he once hapned to be by at a Bargain of this kind; and a foreign Gentleman of his Acquaintance, who had been in Treaty about the Girl some time before, delaying to give a positive Answer, because her Shape was none of the cleanest, her Neck not form'd as he cou'd wish; the Aunt told him plainly, he must take no more time to consider; That the Father Preacher of one of the first Convents of Venice, whom she nam'd, was entred into a Treaty with her, and had bid like a Chapman at the first word.* He † says besides, it's the common Opinion at *Venice*, *That one Brother marrys for all the rest; and affirms, There's ground for this,* tho 'twere needless to give the Proofs. Which shews, the most beastly abominable Incest gives no horror at *Venice*. What he observes of the vast Number of Courtizans, the full liberty

* Part. 3. Art. des Courtizans. † Ibid. Art. de Mariage de Nobles.

they enjoy, the credit they are in with the People, and the Caresses they meet with in the Convents, when they make a Visit to the Sisters of those who entertain, is an incontestable Proof that their Women have lost all sense of Honor and Vertue; *The rather, since those who know Rome and Venice alike, are puzzl'd to tell which of the two exceeds in Numbers of Courtizans, or Kinds of Leudness, as the same Mr. Didier expresses it.*

If those who attend foreign Embassadors to *Paris*, durst publish as free Relations when they return, as the *French* do of them, I don't doubt they might publish a great deal. But our Neighbors stand too much in awe of the *French* Nation, to print any thing to its prejudice; or if they do, we take care such Books ne'er come among the People, either by forbidding the Importation, or reprinting 'em without the Passages which grate. This course Mr. *Taleman* has taken in his Version of Cavalier *Nani's* History. But how discreet soever Strangers be, the Dissoluteness of our Women is ne'er the less real; might one trace 'em in all their forc'd Miscarryings, Poisonings, Deeds of Darknes and Calumnys, with which Intrigues are as much complicated in *France* as elsewhere, 'twou'd give a horror to the most profligate. Yet can you imagine, those concern'd in such abominable Practices, laugh at the Gospel as a Fable? Far from it. The greatest part of these Women won't neglect saying over their Litany at the proper Hours, and the other Devotions taught 'em in their Childhood. Some are the constantest of any at the publick Exercises of Religion. Some bestow large Charitys, and noble Foundations for Divine Service; hope to repent one day, and be sav'd; confess

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feis once a year at least, as the Church ordains; deny themselves some days pleasure, under the terror of their Confessors censures; abhor what they deem Heretical, and take pains to convert those they think in a bad Religion. Things which plainly shew they retain a deep Sense of Christianity, amidst all their Impuritys.

You'll tell me they do all this to confound the Censorious, and stagger those who're sure they are naught. I believe some may, (as for the Courtizans of *Italy*, 'tis a Jest to think they take any pains to save their Reputation) And I own further, when I see a Coquet Lady very sollicitous in converting Hereticks, and never easy, if a Hugonot Scullion has crept into her Family, till she has forc'd him by Threats or Promises to abjure; I'm tempted to think she, and such as she, take these Courses purely for a Mask, or for the Mode. For how is't possible a Woman, whose Cabinet's cram'd with Poisons, prepar'd to dispatch her Husband, if he grow Incommode, or her Galant, if he sacrifice her to another, shou'd break her Heart about the State of a Heretick from a principle of Charity? Yet I still insist, that generally speaking, Women of ill Lives may be mov'd to Works of Charity towards the Poor, or towards Hereticks, not only by the Human Motives already touch'd on, but also from a Persuasion that such Acts of Charity compensate for their Sins. This seems at first to make against me, because it proves that the Faith which subsists in the Conscience of the greatest Sinners, prompts 'em from time to time to good Actions. But in reality it's the fullest Demonstration of what I advance; to wit, 1. That

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they who run into all kind of Excesses, don't forfeit the Sense of Religion. 2. That the *primum Mobile* of Man's Actions lies not in his religious Principles, but in the bent and inclination of his Soul, to which we see him sacrifice the very Precepts of Religion, when seemingly in the perfect Practice of 'em. In effect, he who gives an Alms, or labors to convert a Heretick, in hopes thereby to compensate for his Sins, present or future; that's to say, those Sins he finds he shall ne'er part with; only makes Religion a Tool to his vicious Inclinations. You shall soon have further Proofs of this Proposition, *That they who give themselves up to their Vices, don't part with the Belief of our Mysterys.*

SECT. CXLIII. *What Principles result from these Reasonings.*

WE may therefore lay down as Principles incontestable: 1. That Men may at the same time be very dissolute in their Lives, and very firmly persuaded of the Truth even of the Christian Religion. 2. That speculative Opinions are not the true Spring of our Actions. 3. That generally speaking (for I except those led by the Spirit of God) a Religious Persuasion is no farther the Rule of our Actions, than as it often serves to kindle our Indignation against those of a different Opinion, fill us with Terror when threaten'd by any Danger, or some other Passion of this kind: but above all, with a certain unaccountable Fervor in the practice of outward Acts of Religion; in a persuasion, that these, with a publick Profession of the Faith, are a sufficient

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Bulwark against the Consequences of our Sins, and will one day avail to our Pardon. From this Principle we may plainly see, how much they are mistaken, who believe Idolaters must necessarily be more vertuous than Atheists.

SECT. CXLIV. *That Atheists and Idolaters are prompted to Sin by the same Principle.*

FOR if the Persuasion there's a Providence punishing Evil-doers, and rewarding the Good, ben't the Spring of particular Actions, as I have now made appear; it follows, the Atheist and Idolater are sway'd by the same Principle with respect to Manners; that's to say, by their Inclinations and Constitution, or the weight of those Habits which each has contracted. So that to calculate which of the two is wickedest, we need only find out the reigning Passion of both Constitutions. And assure your self, if the Idolater's Constitution inclines to good Eating and Drinking, to Women, Violence, or Choler, he shall be incomparably a greater Sinner than the Atheist of a cold pacifick Temper. When we take only a general Survey of these Cases, we imagine that the Atheist, who considers he may be drunk without offence, shall be drunk every day of his life. But they who think of the Maxim, *Trahit sua quemq; voluptas*, and consult the Heart of Man more thorowly, don't go quite so fast. They inquire how the Atheist's Taste lies, before they make a judgment of his Conduct. If they find he loves Liquor; that Drinking's his darling Pleasure; that he values his Bottle more than the Character of a

sober Man, they conclude he drinks as long as he can stand. But they don't by this pretend he drinks more than many Christians who guzzle all their life-time. If they find he's indifferent to Wine, they do him the Justice to believe he drinks no more than quenches his Thirst. I say the same of any other criminal Enjoyment. When the Atheist's Taſt lies towards it, he takes his full ſwing. If he has no reliſh for't, he lets it paſs; the Caſe exactly of all Idolaters, and the greateſt part of Chriſtians. A plain Argument, that a Spirit of Debauchery ariſes not from our having or not having Opinions concerning the Exiſtence of God, but from the particular Taint of the Caſk, and ſpecifick Corruption reſulting from the Body, continually fortify'd by repeated Acts and Habits of Voluptuouſneſs.

SECT. CXLV. *That this Principle is no more corrected in Idolaters than Atheiſts.*

LET People object as long as they pleaſe, that the Fear of God is a Sovereign Means of abating this Natural Corruption; ſtill I appeal to Experience, and ſtill aſk why the Pagans fear of the Gods, which ran to an exceſſive degree of Superſtition, check'd this Corruption ſo little, that there's no Vice, how abominable ſoever, but reign'd in 'em without controul. They might collect and preſerve Signal Inſtances of the Wrath of Heaven againſt Sacrilege and Perjury, as many as they pleas'd; forge diſmal Accounts to ſcare the Ungodly; frame pompous Deſcriptions, Furies, Hell, and Elyſian Fields; 'twas all to no purpoſe: they found as many falſe Witneſſes as Oc-
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asions for 'em; as many Temples rifled, as might be without present Death. *Juvenal's* inimitable in his Character of the false Witnesses who own'd no God, and the false Witnesses who did. Those, he says, perjur'd themselves without Demur, these had a short Qualm; and when that was over, swore with an amazing Impudence. They have Remorses soon after, and fancy the Divine Vengeance continually at their Heels. Yet they never mend, but swear as before, when occasion offers.

Here's a Copy from the Life. The same Spirit reigns still far and near, and drags Men to Sin thro all the Flashes of Hell, and Remorses of Conscience. So that to dispute this Point, is opposing Metaphysical Subtilties to Matter of Fact; like the Philosopher, who wou'd prove the Impossibility of Motion. I may be allow'd, I presume, to make use of *Diogenes's* Argument, who without answering categorically to all his Sophisms, walk'd a Turn or two about the Room: For nothing is fitter to convince a fair Mind, of its going on a false Hypothesis, than shewing the Argument contradicts Experience. If it be therefore true, as History and common Life evince, That Men may run headlong all the Lengths of Sin, while perswaded of the Truths of Religion; that there's a God who terribly repays the Sinner, and duly rewards the Good; we must agree, that they who offer this Persuasion as a Proof or Pledg of a good Life, are grossly mistaken; and consequently, that 'tis reasoning on a false Principle, to conclude, because a Man's an Idolater, he lives a better moral Life than an Atheist. Did they only say he ought to be the best Man, the Reasoning

were just: But how vast a difference is there, between what one ought to be, and what he is?

I have already said, we have no Annals of any Atheist Nation. So we can't oppose Experience to the conjecture, which at first thought one forms upon this Case; To wit, that Atheists are incapable of Moral Vertue, and just so many Savages; among whom, one's as much in danger of his Life, as in a Den of Lions or Tigers. But 'tis no hard matter to shew, this Conjecture is very uncertain. For since Experience teaches, that they who believe a Heaven and a Hell, are capable of the greatest Enormitys; it's plain, a mischievous Inclination neither arises from an Ignorance of God's Existence, nor is check'd by the Knowledg of a Supreme Judg who punishes and rewards. Hence it follows, that an Inclination to do ill, belongs no more to a Heart void of the Sense of God, than one possess'd with it; and that one is under no looser a Rein than the other. It likewise follows, that a malicious Inclination results from the Ground of Human Nature, and is fortify'd by the Passions; which rising in the very Mass of our Blood, are infinitely diversify'd according to the different Accidents of Life. It follows lastly, That an Inclination to Pity, Sobriety, Good Nature, &c. arises not from the Supposition of a God (else we must say no Pagan was ever dissolute or cruel) but from the particular natural Temper and Constitution, fortify'd by Education, by Self-love, Vain-glory, an Instinct of Reason, or such-like Motives, which prevail in Atheists as well as others. There's no ground then to maintain, that an Atheist must necessarily be more inordinate than an Idolater.

SECT. CXLVI. *Sound Divinity teaches, That the Corruption of Nature is as much without remedy in Idolaters as Atheists.*

THIS agrees perfectly with *St. Austin's* Doctrine, which imports the Pagans never perform'd a meritorious Action; that is, never acted vertuously from a good Principle, or out of a good End. Isn't this teaching, that all the Pagan Vertues were the result of Constitution, or some favorite Passion? And what hinders but an Atheist may perform as fair Actions as a Pagan, by the benefit of a good natural Temper, or Instinct of a prevailing Passion? If the Pagan never acted for the Glory of God; if he ne'er gave an Alms from a Motive of Charity; if the use made of his Credit for hindring the Oppression of the Innocent, was ne'er refer'd to the Honor of God; 'tis plain, the Knowledge of God was no cause of his acting, and that he had done the same, tho an utter stranger to his holy Name: And consequently an Atheist, by *St. Austin's* Principles, is capable of performing all the moral Dutys we admire in Paganism. This is my constant Answer to all alledg'd Examples of Heathen Vertues. I admire these Vertues as much as others, but maintain there's nothing in 'em which may not be ascrib'd to Natural Temper, Education, Glory, a fondness for one kind of good Name, a love of Vertue for its own sake, and many Motives more fit to act upon all in general, whether with or without Religion.

Consider further, we are expressly taught, That Man can't turn himself to God, nor resist the

weight of Concupiscence, without a supernatural Assistance of Grace; and that this Grace do's not consist in barely knowing there's a God, or admitting the Mysterys of Religion, but in a principle of Charity, inflaming with the Love of God, and uniting us to him as our Sovereign Good. This plainly shews, that they who rest in a simple Belief of our Mysterys, are void of sanctifying Grace, and still under the Bondage and Yoke of Sin; much more that the loose confused Knowledg the Pagans had of God, did not deliver 'em from the Dominion of Original Sin, and the irresistible Impressions of Concupiscence. So that the Grace of the Holy Spirit which makes us Children of God, and Charity which helps us to resist the Temptations of our corrupt Nature, being never afforded the Pagans, they were as destitute of the true Principle of Good Works, as the rankest Atheist, and as far from being Vertuous.

I won't deny there have been Pagans, who making the utmost use of their Notions of the Divine Nature, have render'd it the means of abating the Violence of their Passions. But 'tis probable, where this Motive succeeded, the Passions were naturally so moderate, they might truckle to Reason without this Aid, either by their affecting to distinguish themselves in an austere way of Life, or judging it the best means of preserving Health, or reaping some kind of Praise or Profit. Now, Sir, here are the new Proofs I promis'd you.

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SECT. CXLVII. 4th Proof, drawn from the
Case of Devils and Sorcerers, which shews,
that those in the most profligate State believe a
God.

LET no one be startled at what I advance,
That a bare belief of our Mysterys is not that
which sanctifys the Heart. For nothing's more
true, as appears by the Example of so many
Christians who never doubt, who are ready to be-
lieve ten thousand new Articles of Faith if the
Church pleases, and yet wallow in all kind of Sen-
suality. This appears still clearer from the Case
of the Devils, who know full well what is to be
believ'd and practis'd, and yet are the wickedest
Beings of the whole Creation, and they, whose
Example best demonstrates, Atheism is not the
Origin of Sin. For had the Devils been Atheists,
their Iniquity had been much less, most of their
Crimes proceeding from a detestable Desire of
travelling all the Purposes of God.

The same appears from the Case of Magicians
and Sorcerers. Undoubtedly they, who 'tis said
make a Compact with the Devil, believe there's a
God: And this undoubtedly, of giving them-
selves to the Devil to obey him in all things, is the
most horrible of all Iniquitys. Undoubtedly then
there are Men, who under the belief of a God
are wickedder than Atheists. 'Tis false then, that
Atheism is the source of the greatest Sins: Magick
Idolatry at least, on which Mr. *Felifax*, one of your
Doctors, has wrote a curious Treatise, is a degree
worse. The same Devil and his Imps are besides
an evident Proof of what I have so often shewn,
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That the most notoriously wicked don't cast off the Belief of a God ; which by the way is not contradicted by the Example of those, who to be reveng'd of their Divinity, destroy'd their Altars and Images : for never any one sought Revenge who judg'd not himself injur'd, nor ever thought himself injur'd by what was not.

SECT. CXLVIII. 5th Proof, from a general
Review of common Life.

SO true is it that a belief of our Mysterys is consistent with an inordinate Course of Life, that no body who has seen the World a little, but knows above a thousand Persons firmly persuaded of all the Miracles of Christianity come to their Knowledg, and ready to believe a hundred times as many, did any one take care to enrich the publick with 'em, who yet live the most disorderly Lives. Of one side you see several of these enter themselves into some Fraternity, in hopes to partake of the Prayers, Merits, and Graces of the Society, while pursuing their Pleasures. You see 'em in Sicknes have recourse to some Relick brought from *Rome*, of Sovereign Virtue against certain Ails, or the Benediction of some Monk famous for miraculous Cures. You see 'em set out with their Scapulary, or some other holy thing, of Virtue to preserve from drowning, or from dying without Confession, or being bit by a mad Dog, &c. You see some of 'em even keep Lent and Vigils. You see 'em, if a Heretick mocks at our Religion, call him a thousand ugly Names, give him the bitterest ill Language, and sometimes come to downright Blows. When they're very rich, you see 'em be-

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flow noble Presents on the Religious, and Hospitals, build Chappels, and contribute liberally to the adorning the Churches. For how many of the richest Ornaments of our Churches are the Gifts of famous Publicans, and Courtizans of high Renown, who having heap'd up much ill-gotten Wealth, endeavor to make their Peace with God, by consecrating a small Pittance to his Service? How many Offerings under which may be written, *A Victim for Sin*, or some Inscription like that of *Diogenes* on the Pedestal of the Golden *Venus*, dedicated by *Phryne* to the Temple of *Delphos*, * *From the Debauchery of the Greeks*? Last of all, you see these Gentlemen we talk of go to Mass daily, rejoic'd tho if the quick Cordelier dispatches 'em. So far we have seen their bright side. Let's look at 'em by the Reverse, they are Men who scarce speak three Words without an Oath, who talk of nothing at Table, either in Taverns or elsewhere, but their pretended Favors, and in Expressions wou'd make Impudence blush. Then they are Men who snatch on every hand. Are they at War? They ransack the wretched Peasant, cheat their starving Soldiers. Are they commanding Officers? They have a thousand sinister violent ways of enriching themselves. Are they in publick Affairs, the great Scene of Rapine and Extortion? They've a thousand Tricks and Fetches to tease Mankind? Whatever Profession they're of, they lie, they rail eternally, they cheat at Play, sacrifice all to their Spite and Revenge, commit infinite Excesses, *Meretrix non sufficit omnis*; they study and use several Incentives to second their filthy Desires: In a

* Ex Græcorum Intemperantia.

word, with regard to Morality, they are no way distinguish'd from profane Christians. Nor are they only old Lechers, such as *Mr. de St. Didier* speaks of, *who use several vile extravagant Artifices to provoke their Lusts, when natural Decay bereaves 'em of the Power, tho not the Will;* but the young and vigorous often use the same to protract their brutal Enjoyments.

SECT. CXLIX. 6th Proof, *drawn from the pretended Devotion of some flagitious Sinners for the Blessed Virgin.*

THE Devotion of the Catholick Church for the Blessed Virgin is carry'd to such a pitch, that we may safely say, it makes up one of the considerablest Parts of Worship. They may reproach us ever so much with the Extravagances and Hyberboles of our Monks, the Devotion still subsists in high vogue: Few venture to shock the People in their Usages and Opinions, this in particular is too universal to be reform'd. We have new Books daily added to the vast Collections for several Ages, of the Honors and Miracles of our Lady. And among the Maxims advanc'd by the Authors of these Books, 'tis none of the least remarkable, *That one may be extreme wicked, and yet preserve a deep Devotion for the Mother of God;* of which we have numberless Instances in the Books entitl'd: *The Mirror of Examples: The Flower of Examples, or Historical Catechism: The Chronicles of the Mother of God, &c.* * *Alexis de Salo*, and many more, tell us of a young Man so lost and abandon'd in his Sins, that being cast into Prison

* *Methode pour servir la vierge Privil. 3.*

for several Murders and Felonys, he renounc'd the Son of God and all the Sacraments, on a Promise from the Devil of escaping the Gallows: He assures us, I say, this Person never miss'd repeating the *Ave Maria* daily, nor ever wou'd consent to the Devil's Proposition of renouncing the Holy Virgin. So much the better for him; for observing an Image of our Lady on a Chappel as he was going to Execution, he offer'd his Prayers to it: whereupon the Image gently bending towards its Votary, catches him fast by the Arm, so that the Officers with all their Force cou'd never drag him from the place. The same Author informs us of a * Courtizan extremely dissolute, who yet never fail'd to make seven Reverences daily to the Blessed Virgin, and say an *Ave Maria*; the Reason why a vertuous Lady, griev'd to see her Husband in a sinful Commerce with the infamous Prostitute, cou'd yet never by her Supplications prevail on the Mother of God to give her the least Rebuke, for the Image she invoc'd answer'd her in express terms, *I can't possibly grant your Request; not that I'm insensible of the Justice of it; but the Affection this Harlot preserves for me amidst all her wicked Courses, binds my Hands, and won't suffer me to inflict the Punishment you demand.* I shall give another Example from the *Queen of Navarre's Tidings*, of a young Prince whom she names not, but describes plain enough; who going to an Assignment, pass'd constantly thro a Church in his way, and offer'd up his Devotions: coming back the same way, after caressing his Mistress, he never miss'd turning into the same Church, and saying his

* Ibid. Privil. 5.

Prayers again. The Queen gives it as an instance of his singular Devotion. But * *Montagne* is not of her Mind, and so far he's right.

For as the Bishop of *Chartres* has lately prov'd by † unanswerable Arguments, there can be no true Devotion for God or his Saints, in a Heart which loves not God, nor obeys him. And as for the Blessed Virgin's pretended Miracles in favor of some Profligate's persevering in her Worship, this learned Bishop makes no scruple to || reject 'em. This however affords a convincing Argument of what I advance, as I shall explain.

Since a prodigious Number of Authors have observ'd that Persons engag'd in the wickedest Courses have yet persever'd in their Devotion for the Blessed Virgin; 'tis a sign Men are easily persuaded the Knowledg of God is consistent with all kind of Crimes, and consequently contradict themselves, by believing Idolaters necessarily more righteous than those who know no God. Besides, it's certain, as the Bishop proves, the Virgin's Votarys of this Character are by no means sincere Votarys. Yet neither he nor any other shall ever prove, such Persons don't make their Reverences to our Lady's Image, and say the *Ave Maria* in a state of most abominable Sin, recommend themselves to her Protection, frequent the particular Places, where 'tis believ'd she sheds her Graces most, contribute to the adorning her Chappels, in general practise a thousand outward petty Exercises of Devotion. Which shews these Wretches

* *Essays*, b. 1. ch. 56. † *De Sanctorum & præcipue B. Virg. cultu*, Tract. 3. Art. 5. & 40.

retain a sense of our Mysterys, since they're fully persuaded the Blessed Virgin can bestow Graces on 'em for this Life and that which is to come.

SECT. CL. *Reflections on a Work of P. Rapin.*

THIS Distinction between true Devotion, and the outward Exercises of it, shou'd be made with respect to Faith also. A celebrated Jesuit has lately publish'd a small Treatise of the Decay of Faith in these last Ages; and pretends the horrible Corruption of the World springs principally from the Growth of Scepticism. Nothing's more eloquent than his Description of the Manners of the Age in these words: * *Was ever such Licentiousness known in Youth, such Ambition among the Great, such Debaucherys among the meaner sort? Was ever more Dissoluteness among the Men, or Luxury among Women; more Falshood in the People, more want of Sincerity in all Estates and Conditions of Men? Was ever less Sanctity in Wedlock, less Uprightness in ordinary Dealing, less Shame or Modesty in all Conversation? The Luxury in Apparel, Magnificence in Furniture, Delicacy of Tables, Superfluities of Expence, Licentiousness of Manners, Curiosity in holy Things, and all Irregularitys of Life, are carry'd to an unheard of Excess. How much Coldness in attending on the Sacraments, what a Deadness in Piety, how much Grimace in Devotion, how much Negligence in the Essentials of Duty, how much Indifference for heavenly Things? What Corruption of the Mind as to Knowledge, what Depravation of the Heart as to Practice, what Profanations of the Altar, what Prostitution of every thing most holy, and most august in the Ex-*

* *The Faith of the last Ages, p. 102, &c.*

ercises of Religion? All Principles of true Goodness are reversed: we prefer the Acquaintance of a genteel Rake, who knows the World, to that of a Man of Vertue who knows it not; and, playing the Rogue slyly so as not to shock the publick, passes for Probity in the Judgment of the World, where the most impious Maxims are applauded if broach'd by Persons of Figure, or attended with Circumstances which give 'em a shine. For who knows not that Libertinism in these latter Days is Wit among the Quality; a Fury of gaming, the Business of People of Condition; Adultery an Amusement; the Sale of Benefices, providing for a Family; Flattery, Lying, Treachery, Trick, Dissimulation, Court-Accomplishments; and that hardly any one raises or distinguishes himself by any other Merit than Leudness and Iniquity? I say nothing of those black atrocious Crimes, flowing in upon this last unhappy point of time, the very Idea of which strikes the Mind with horror. I pass over all the Abominations in the use of Poison, unknown till now to the Candor of our Nation, and to which our Forefathers were strangers, because they ne'er cou'd turn their Thoughts far enough from such an Iniquity, nor suppress the bare Imagination too soon. To give the Character of the Age, in a word; never was Morality so much the talk, never upright Manners so rare, never so much Reformation and so few reform'd; never more Knowledg, and less Piety; never better Preaching, and fewer Conversions; never frequenter Communion, and less Change of Life; never more Wit and good Sense among the Great, and less Application to things serious and solid.

Shou'd we live (says he afterwards) in these Enormitys, had we a grain of Faith? Shou'd we take so many fatal steps, did we follow its Lights? and shou'd we be so corrupt and inordinate, were we Christi-

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ans? I answer him, had we that true Faith which is never separated from the Love of God, did we follow the Light of our Conscience, and were Christians indeed, we shou'd never live in these Enormitys. But this hinders not our having a sufficient degree of Faith to be persuaded of the Truth of the Gospel, tho we live as ill as possible. There's a vast difference between the want of a true Faith and downright Unbelief; for one may be void of such a Faith, that is, of the Disposition of Heart, inclining us to forsake whatever we know opposite to the Will of God, and yet believe the Gospel: so that they play upon the Ambiguity of Words, who say, the Dissoluteness of the Age proceeds from a Decay of Faith. If they mean, it proceeds from a Decay of that Christian Vertue, which prompts us to sacrifice all vicious Desires to the Will of God, they are right. But if they mean, it springs from a want of Persuasion, or because Men look on the Principles of Christian Morality as problematick Points, of which we have not a full Evidence, they're highly in the wrong. For except some of Quality, and a few false learn'd, or perhaps here and there one of your own Theologists, all among us believe the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Death and Passion of JESUS CHRIST, his Ascension into Heaven, his Presence on our Altars, the last Judgment, Resurrection of the Body, a Hell and Heaven. They han't a Persuasion in these points attended with Evidence; that may be: but they have a Persuasion which excludes all doubting. Our Peasants, our Tradesmen, our Soldiers, our Burghers, all our Women, most part of the Gentry and Scholars believe all the Articles of the Creed, honestly and

and without Hesitation. They who doubt the Divinity of the Christian Religion, and look on another Life as Fable, are a very small Party.

SECT. CLI. *Whether there be many Atheists in Princes Courts.*

TIS the common Opinion, that Princes and Statesmen have no Religion; grounded on their living as if they believ'd neither Heaven nor Hell; sacrificing all to their Ambition, revenging the least Injury; caressing their mortal Enemys when their Interest requires, and watching every Advantage to destroy 'em; forsaking their Friends in disgrace, always in Occupations inconsistent with the Spirit of the Gospel, Gaming, Gallantrys, Entertainments, Exactions, avoiding the very Appearance of Piety, making a mock of Devotion; in a word, being Slaves to all the Vanities of the World. In one sense they have no Religion, it being only a dead unoperative Principle in some dark Corner of the Soul. But it's a gross mistake to think they're Atheists; so far from it, that very few run into certain Superstitions more than they. Not to mention their old Passion for Astrology, isn't it well known they have still an extreme Curiosity for Fortune-tellers? Are they not still bewitch'd to Presages? Are there many great Houses, in which they don't pretend they are regularly certify'd, by Fantoms or Presages, when one of the Line's to die? How many prophetick Traditions in antient Familys? How many Prodigys and miraculous Accidents do the Great relate of their Ancestors? You'll tell me, this is no Argument of their own Persuasion, tho they'd

they'd have others believe 'em the peculiar Charge of the Destinys. I grant it as to some; but the greatest part are so fond of thinking themselves distinguish'd by Providence, that they come to believe it in earnest. All our Historians agree, Magick was ne'er so much in vogue as in the Court of *France*, under *Catherine de Medicis*: which were impossible, had they not believ'd a God, for none despise Sorcerers and Magicians so much as Atheists.

Let's look at the Great on a Death-bed; here Nature pulls off the Mask, here they discover the real Sentiments of their Soul, if ever they are capable on't. Do we see any more forward than Princes, Dukes, and Counts, in recommending themselves to the Virtues of holy Relicks, and Intercession of the Blest? Do any more earnestly desire to see P. *Marc d'Aviano*, or some such Person famous for his Sanctity, and Gift of healing Diseases? What Presents don't they send to the Cloisters, to obtain their Prayers for Recovery of Health? Whence come the Riches of the Church, but from great Mens Fears of staying too long in Purgatory? I own they don't leave such large Legacys now as heretofore, yet they are considerable. The worst on't is, the Heirs don't faithfully execute the Wills of the Testator, dreading Death less than he, as they see it farther off. This altogether shews plainly, that a Court does not make Men renounce the *Apostles Creed*; they only contradict it in their Practice, so long as they're in good Health.

SECT. CLII. *A particular Consideration of the Sentiments of Lewis XI.*

BY saying great Men discover a belief of our Mysterys on a Death-bed, it can't be suppos'd I form their Elogy; for possibly a desire of recovering Health may be the sole Cause of their flying to the Prayers of God's good Servants. Now that Faith which comes by a Fever is good for little; and, with due submission to the Fathers *Minims*, the Voyage of *St. Francis de Paul* from the further end of *Calabria* to the Court of *Lewis XI.* gives me no great Idea of this Prince's Piety. However I shall turn this Voyage to my purpose, because *Lewis XI.* profess'd a Duplicity of Heart all his Life long, so opposite to the Spirit of the Gospel, that no King can less rashly be suspected of Irreligion. A Cheat, a Prince who makes a mock of his Word and Honor, who spreads Snares for his Neighbors, aggrandizes himself by Fraud, and all sinister Arts, seems more criminal than a Conqueror, who, like *Alexander*, declares above-board he'll carry all before him. And if *Lewis XI.* was not so great a disturber of Mankind, 'twas not that he had more Conscience, but less Courage and Capacity. This King's Historians agree, his Pilgrimages * and ferventest Devotions were generally a Cloke to some Design, very opposite to the Principles of Justice and Piety: *He made use of 'em to catch and surprize, and squar'd Religion to his Designs, not his Designs*

* *Marthieu Hist. de Louis XI. l. 11. c. 2.*

to Religion. † His Actions had a fair Outside, but a wicked Intention; thinking by his Bigotry to impose on God and Man. He rob'd the Poor, to enrich the Churches; and loading his People with more Taxes and Tributes than any of his Predecessors, render'd 'em disaffected to his Person. || He committed many Acts of Injustice, Violence and Oppression; and brought his People into such distress, that by the time he dy'd they had lost all Patience.

'Twere tiresom to repeat all that's amiss of him in History; and thither I refer those who don't believe that Lewis XI. if ever any King, might justly be tax'd of Atheism. Yet nothing's more false than that this Prince was not persuaded of the Truth of Religion: For besides his being once * overheard in this Prayer before the great Altar of *Notredame de Cleri*, *Ah my good Lady, my pretty Mistress, my choice Friend, in whom I have always had Consolation! I beseech thee to intreat God for me, and be my Advocate with him, that he wou'd pardon me the Murder of my Brother, whom I got poison'd by this cursed Abbot of St. John; to Thee I confess my Sin, as to my kind Patroness and Mistress—— Obtain my Pardon therefore, my good Lady, and I know what I'll give you:* Beside this Prayer, I say, we discover, by his earnestness in his last Sickness to see *St. Francis de Paule*, he was persuaded of the Efficacy of Prayer. This poor Prince had such a desire to live a little longer, that hearing this holy Hermit wrought many Miracles in *Calabria*, he prevail'd with the Pope to command

† Du Haillan. *Traité des Affaires de France.*
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|| *Chronique*

* *Brancome Life of Char. VIII.*

him || immediately to his Assistance; and was so confident his Presence and Prayers wou'd prolong his Days, that the first Word he spoke to him was begging to save his Life; and sent every Minute to tell the good Man, 'Twas in his Power, if he pleas'd, to preserve him. The same Passion for living made him send to the Pope for several Relicks, as we read in *Philip de Communes*: Pope Sixtus IV. says he, being inform'd, the King out of Devotion desir'd the Corporal on which Monsieur St. Pierre us'd to sing Mass, immediately sent it with several other Relicks. The Historian *Matthieu* * says, he was surrounded with Relicks in his Sickness, not imagining Death cou'd have the hardiness to force thro such a Barricade. He sent likewise for the † holy Vial, intending to take such another Uncction as he had at his Coronation, as the same *Communes* relates. But nothing shews his fondness for Life, like his Amendments of the Prayer compos'd to be offer'd St. *Eutropius* for the Health of his Body as well as Soul; for he struck || out that part about the Health of his Soul, saying, 'Twas enough if he cou'd have the Health of his Body, without importuning the Saint for too many things at once. One must conclude from all this Behaviour, he was firmly persuaded of the Truths of our Tenets; and so we have an instance in his Person of the perfectest Agreement between a Heart intirely wicked, and the Persuasion of a God to an excess of Bigotry.

|| *Matthieu Hist. Louis XI. l. 10.*

* *Ibid.*

† *The Holy Vial suppos'd to fall from Heaven, in which Oil is kept for anointing the Kings of France.*

|| *Claud. Seissel Hist. Louis XI.*

SECT. CLIII. *That the Court's no Antidote
against Superstition or popular Error.*

'TIS pure Illusion then to imagine, because Princes make no conscience of observing Treatys, or Alliances the most solemnly sworn, nor deny their craving Passions, they therefore believe no God. I say it again, the Great, generally speaking, are more superstitious in some Points than other Men. People fancy, being descended of a Noble Family, and bred in a Prince's Court, bestows great and sublime Thoughts o' course; but they who fancy so, confound the Understanding and Heart. The Advantages of Birth and Education undoubtedly elevate the latter. We see few of this Rank who are not brave; we see many who discover an Intrepidity and boundless Ambition: but the Understanding does not keep pace. It must be own'd, a Court polishes it exceedingly; but bestows not that Stretch, I mean that Force which raises the Mind above the Prejudices of Childhood, and enables to penetrate the Sources of Truth thro all surrounding Clouds of Error. I go further, and affirm, The Court inspires not that false pretended Force of Mind which Atheists and Deists boast of; and I'll maintain, did we examine it carefully, we shou'd find this pretended Firmness of Mind grow ranker in the Exercises of Dispute in Schools, than in the Court or Army. So, Sir, let's join in this, That the Great, with all their glittering Pomp, remain under the Prejudices of Childhood, as much as others, with regard to the Tenets of Religion or natural Truths.

In effect, did the Air of the great World purge off the early Impressions of Religion, we shou'd not find so much Superstition in the first Men of the *Roman* Commonwealth. 'Tis evident from infinite Examples, that the Consuls, Dictators, and others of the first Rank in *Rome*, were extreme superstitious. The Pagan Kings and Emperors were furiously bigotted the same way; and one might bring a thousand Cases to prove, that Policy was not always the Spring of their Religion, but mere Infirmary of Mind; tho I own it's often to be ascrib'd to Politick Ends. Turn your Thoughts back a little on what I offer'd already * concerning *Tarquin* the Proud, *Nero*, *Catilin*, &c. and permit me, now I mention *Catilin*, to observe what was commonly said in *Rome*, † that he gave an Oath of Secrecy to his Accomplices, and to bind it the stronger, made 'em drink Human Blood mingled with Wine: which shews, the Band of Villains this wicked Man had cull'd out for the most execrable Enterprize in the World, was persuaded of an All-seeing Justice, which revenges the Violation of an Oath. *Lentulus*, one of the principal Accomplices, ingag'd in the Conspiracy, on || a Presumption that the Sybils Books, and Answers of the *Aruspices*, decreed him the Empire of *Rome*; an Argument he was far from Atheism, since he was not got above the vanity of Augurys.

* Sect. 130. † Sallust. de Bello Catilin.

|| *Lentulum autem sibi confirmasse ex fatis Sybillinis, Haruspicumque responsis, se esse tertium illum Cornelium, ad quem regnum urbis atque imperium pervenire esset necesse. Cic. in Catil. Orat. 3.*

SECT. CLIV. Of the Superstition of Alexander.

BUT here, Sir, is one Example more equal to a Mathematical Demonstration. If the Spirit of the Court tended to beget Atheism in the Human Mind, it cou'd ne'er have fail'd in *Alexander*, because the most ambitious of all Mortals, and at the same time the hardiest and the happiest. Besides, he had done a hundred things, to express a horrible contempt of his Gods. I pass over his Conquests, tho' rightly consider'd nothing's more impious and unjust than driving the World as he did, and robbing Men by open Violence of their natural Right. I only take notice of his Insolence in challenging Divine Worship, and demolishing the Temple of *Esculapius*, to revenge the Death of a Favorite; and yet for all this the farthest in the World from Atheism. I said already, he was chid by his Governor for his wast of Holy Incense in his earlier Days; and now observe, he never mov'd without his Soothsayer *Aristander*, to know if the Presages of the Victims went well, when resolv'd on the least Enterprize. 'Tis true, he left consulting the Soothsayers when at the height of his Fortune; but on the least cross Accident * relapsed, and put himself into the Hands of *Aristander*. So that tow'rd the latter end of his Life, fancying, by some Presages, the Gods

* Qui post Darium victum ariolos & vates consulere desiderat, rursus ad superstitionem, humanarum gentium ludibria revolutus, Aristandrum cui credulitatem suam addixerat, explorare eventum rerum sacrificiis iussit. *Q. Curt. l. 7. c. 7.*

displeased, he took the least uncommon Event for Prodigy and Celestial Warning, and his Court was crouded with Soothsayers, who constantly sacrific'd or purify'd, or practis'd some other Juggle of their Myſtery, as *Plutarch* informs in the Life of this Conqueror. And now believe them if you will, who affirm, as if they had the Gift of ſearching the Heart and Reins, that the Court's a nursery of Atheiſts. Methinks I have better ground to deny it, or ſplit the Cauſe, by ſaying 'tis probable there are more ſuch among Courtiers than among the common People: but making a few Exceptions, the Great are as much perſuaded of the Being of a God, a Heaven and Hell, as the Middle ſort. The only difference lies here, that Conſcience is not the Buſineſs of a Court, that there are ſtronger Habits and Temptations, and a greater boldneſs in ſinning there than elſewhere; which makes Courtiers more ignorant in Matters of Religion than ordinary, leſs reſerv'd, and leſs ſubject to remorse. But as to a belief of the main Truths, they are, generally ſpeaking, like the reſt of the World.

Befides, *Lewis XI.* is an incontestable Example, One may be very wicked, and moſt exact in ſeveral little outward Devotions to the Bleſſed Virgin. For this Prince, bad as he was, expended immenſe Sums in adorning the Churches of *Notre Dame*, and order'd the great Bell to toll * at twelve a Clock every day, to put the People in mind of repeating the Salutation. *Claude de Seyſſell* takes notice, *His Devotion was rather Superſtitious than Chriſtian; for if he heard of an Image, or Church*

* *In the Year 1472. Matth. Hiſt. de Louis XI. l. 1. c. 2.*

dedicated

dedicated to God, or the Saints, and particularly to our Lady, where the People paid any extraordinary Devotion, or any Miracles were wrought, thither he took a Progress, or sent one expressly to make an Offering. His Hat besides was quilted with several little Images, mostly Lead or Tin, which he kiss'd at every turn, when good or bad News was brought him, or the Maggot bit, throwing himself on his Knees, whether in publick or private; and sometimes so suddenly, that he seem'd rather frantick than devout.

SECT. CLV. *The Licentiousness, and Zeal of the Court of France in the last Age.*

AMONG the Marks by which one may discover the most egregious Debauchees believe a God, I took notice of their implacable Hatred to those of a different Religion. I might apply this Remark to the Quality, whom I'm labouring to vindicate from the Guilt of Atheism: but because Particulars might carry me too far, I'll confine my self to the Court of Catherine de Medicis.

I told you already, her Court was much addicted to Sorcery; and by this you may easily imagine, tho they believ'd a God, they were capable of all manner of Wickedness. * Accordingly Rioting and Uncleanness reign'd there with an uncontroll'd sway; Perfidiousness, Poisoning, Assassination were grown so common, that contriving the Death of any one they cou'd get a Groat by, was mere Diversion. In former Reigns, the Men drew the Women into Gallantrys by Allurements and Artifice; but now,

* Mezer. *Abregé Chronol. sur la fin de la vie de Charle IX.*

when Amours cover'd the greatest Intrigues and Mysterys of State, the Ladys made the first Advances. The Husbands gave 'em a Loose, out of Interest or Complaisance: And they who lov'd Variety, found their Account in the general Liberty, which instead of one Wife, presented 'em with a Hundred. Here's the Draught, by one View, of a Court abandon'd to Shame.

Take it by another View, and you find 'em firmly perswaded of the Divinity of the Catholick, Apostolick, Roman Religion. Never were the Hereticks persecuted more, than under the Reigns of *Francis I.* and *Harry II.* This not preventing their Increase, the Conventicles were shut up; and 'twas thought more eligible to throw the Kingdom into all the Miserys of a Civil War, than suffer the Exercise of a New Religion in *France.* How, say they! shall it ever be said the Church was rent asunder in the Patrimony of the most Christian King! That Church which sits on the Throne of *Clouis!* That Church of which the Kings of *France* are eldest Sons! No, we'll extirpate all who have the Boldness to affront it. In effect, they betook themselves to Arms, and never made a Treaty with the Hereticks, but for a Handle to destroy 'em; and when open Force was found ineffectual, they had recourse to Stratagem, drew their Chiefs and principal Nobility to Court on the fairest pretence in the World, and massacred 'em in cold Blood. The Butchery and Struggle continu'd, till both Partys out of breath, and rather weary than glutted with one anothers Blood, came at last to as good Terms as they cou'd, each despairing of the Victory. Had the Court of *France* been Atheists, they had ne'er gone into these Measures.

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But they perhaps, who were at the Head of these flaming Zealots of the Catholick Religion, were innocent of all these Disorders. Quite contrary, they were the Men who had the deepest Part in 'em, as we shall find if we trace Messrs. *de Guise* one by one. And to comprehend how a Man may be very Zealous and very Vicious at the same time, we need only consider, the Love of Religion in the greatest Part, is no way different from their other Passions for common Objects. They are much mistaken, who imagine Christians stedfastly adhering to their Religion, and Catholicks inveterately bent against other Sects, derive these Dispositions from above; God's faithful Servants only are inspir'd with a true Zeal by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. The Zeal of the Ungodly is properly Humor; they are fond of Religion as they are of Family, of the place of their Birth, &c. or rather persist in't, as others do in Old Fashions as to Clothes or Weddings. A great many wou'd lose their Lives, rather than be put out of their Old Ways; and so wou'd many a Christian, rather than forbear going to his Devotions in certain Churches, with the Ceremonys continually observ'd there. 'Tis probable the Duke of * *Monpensier*, who had all the Hugonots hang'd as fast as they were taken, and made one of his Officers ravish every pretty Hugonot Girl that fell into his hands, was over-run with this fond Passion, since he us'd to boast himself descended from *St. Louis*, and that *St. Louis* made a Voyage as far as *Africk* to persecute the Enemies of the Catholick Religion. Your great

* Brantome Memoir. Tom. 3.

Lords dote so on the Antiquity of their Families, and Examples of their Ancestors; that this alone's sufficient to inspire 'em with an Abhorrence for Schismatics. To believe then a Religion Divine in which one's bred, and yet commit all the Crimes it forbids, are Things perfectly compatible in the great and small.

Few I think, at this time of day, are on the reserve, in speaking of Queen *Margaret*, Daughter to *Catherine de Medicis*. I may confidently then affirm her an Illustrious Example of the monstrous Wedlock I have been observing between Diffoluteness and Devotion. Here's *Mezeray's* Account of this Queen in her Old Age: * *She kept her small Court the rest of her Life in the Suburbs of St. Germain; an odd Compound of Lechery and Devotion, of Vanity and the Love of Letters, of Christian Charity and Injustice: for as she valu'd her self in being seen often at Church, conversing with Men of Learning, and giving the Tenths of her Revenues to the Monks; so she affected some small Gallantry to the last, inventing new Diversions, and never paying her Debts.*

SECT. CLVI. *The Zeal of the Great Lords of France against the Protestants.*

THE Argument drawn from a hatred to different Sects, takes place on the great Lords; for they exert themselves in the Extirpation of *Calvinism*, according to the new Scheme in vogue, without the least Reformation in their own Lives. They who have Hugonot Tenants, strive to con-

* *Abregé Chronol. ad An. 1605.*

vert 'em by fair or foul means. Governors of Towns take the same pains with the Burghers and Soldiers under their Jurisdiction. They who have *Calvinist* Domesticks, turn 'em away, or make 'em abjure. So that our great Men are neither Atheists nor Deists, whatever their other Principles be. I conclude then once more, That very small's the Number of those who doubt the Truth of the Christian Religion, or reckon future Things a Fable. So that the Abuses *P. Rapin* describes, derive not from the Scepticism of these last Days, but from the evil Inclination of Man's Heart, which needs a stronger Remedy than a bare Acknowledgment of the Gospel's Divine Original.

SECT. CLVII. *A cogent Reason to prove the Necessity of Grace.*

IF you examine this narrowly, I persuade myself, Sir, you'll find it an invincible Argument for the Necessity of an inward Operation of the Spirit in order to the Love of God. The Preacher's business is limited to the persuading us of the Truth: Now one may be convinc'd, and yet not love it. Man therefore is not the Cause of our loving it, but God himself, who, together with the Illumination of the Mind, bestows a Disposition of Heart, which finds greater Pleasure in the Practice of Vertue than of Vice.

SECT. CLVIII. VII Proof, drawn from
frequent Communion.

THese Words of *P. Rapin*, *Never frequenter Communion and less change of Heart*, make me think of *Mr. Arnaud's Treatise of Frequent Communion* *, in which he has given an eloquent Description of the Degeneracy of Mankind. *Who can be ignorant*, says he, *of what the Seculars know but too well by their acquaintance with the World; what the Confessors know yet better by the Necessity of their Function; and what the Preachers sound so loudly from the Pulpit to awaken Sinners to Repentance, That almost all the true Signs of Christianity are lost in Christian Conversation?* Then he descends to Particulars, and sets before us the Abuses of the Marriage-bed, Disorders in Familys, Uncontrolledness of Youth, the Ambition of the Great, Luxury among all Ranks and Degrees, the Unfairness in Dealing, the Adulterating of Merchandizes, the Cheats of Tradesmen, and Debaucherys among the meaner sort. Fornication, says he, is thought a Trifle; Adultery a piece of good Luck; Insincerity a Court-Accomplishment; Common Swearing and Blasphemy, Ornaments of Speech; Lying and Over-reaching, Mysterys in Trade; Gaming Night and Day, the Lady's Recreation; A very good Woman, and a vertuous Woman, two different Things; disguis'd Simony, and the Profanation of the Altar, younger Childrens Portions; Rapine, in fine, and Extortion, the Perquisites of Places, lawful Interest, and Ways of Living, of

* Par. 3. ch. 16.

which

which Ideots only in these days, and Ignorants, make the least scruple. He passes over some abominable Sins unknown to our Forefathers, tho strangely flowing in upon us.

Some perhaps may think this great Doctor's intention is to bewail Mens Infidelity, and signify they are all fall'n into Atheism. Yet this is by no means his Thought, seeing he fairly allows there never were more frequent Confessions or Communions: The Confessionals are throng'd, the Altars lin'd with Communicants; Parish-Churches, and especially the Monasterys, are crouded. It appears from his whole Discourse, That the Persons guilty of all the Enormitys he describes, are the same who confess, and communicate oftneft: and he's not the only Man who owns this Truth.

The Author of a Book entitl'd, *The Practical Morality of the Jesuits*, complaining of the Facility of these Fathers in forgiving Sins, observes, that the greatest Sinners are in no dread of Confession, but run to it with as little Concern as to their Sins; and that they, who fill the Jesuits Churches in the Morning, are the very same, who in the Afternoon fill the Taverns and Gaming-houses. Another Author, unexceptionable in this point, because a Jesuit, giving a lively Image of the corrupt Manners of the Age, says expressly, as we have already observ'd, *There never was more Communicating, and less Change of Life*; and reckons among the Effects of the general Corruption, *those Vicissitudes of forsaking and turning to God, of inordinate Affection and Devotion, under which People communicate; those Intermissions of Sin for the Day of receiving, those Confessions without Repentance, those Repentances with-*

out Amendment, and Conversions without a Change of Life, which are so notorious in the World. It's evident then, there are Numbers who go frequently to Confession, and yet live wicked Lives. From whence it follows by a necessary Consequence, that the greatest part of Christians live very abominably, tho not only convinc'd of the Being of a God, but of the Truth of our Mysterys. For who doubts, that the greatest part of those who confess and communicate so often, act thus purely to expiate their past Offences? an evident Argument they intirely believe the Doctrine of the Church.

SECT. CLIX. *A Confirmation of this Case.*

IN a word, we need only consider the Credulity of our People with respect to Miracles; their firm Confidence in the Intercession of Saints; their Sollicitousness in having Masses for the dead; their desire of being enrol'd in the Fraternitys, or having their Beads toucht at a holy Shrine; the prodigious crouding to a plenary Indulgence; their Facility in giving a vogue to Relicks newly come from *Rome*, as those of *St. Ovide*, for example; their Aversion to *Hugonots*: We need, I say, only consider a hundred things of this kind, to be convinc'd, that a Decay of Faith is not the Vice of Christians. 'Tis hard, says *St. Austin*, to find a Man who says even in his Heart, there is no God: This sort of Men are very rare, and were they the Persons we are commanded to hear with, we should scarce have a Subject to exercise our Patience.

What shall we think of those who lay out for gentle Directors, but that they are firmly persuad-
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ed of our Mysterys, tho in other respects so devoted to their Lusts, that to wallow in 'em with more Liberty, they'l lay hold of all the Expedients of corrupt Casuists?

If any thing be demonstrable in Morality, I doubt not I have demonstrated, that Christians living in the Commission of all kinds of Sin, are yet firmly persuaded of the Truth of their Religion. Whence I conclude, that Infidelity is not the source of a Corruption of Manners; 'tis quite a different thing.

SECT. CLX. *They who ascribe the Corruption of Manners to a Decay of Faith, extenuate the Guilt instead of aggravating it.*

A Superficial Wit, who heard me reason as I do, wou'd certainly believe I design'd an Apology for Sinners; but a Man of more Judgment will see the contrary. For since I endeavor to prove, Men live very wickedly, tho under a Persuasion of Evangelical Truths; 'tis manifest, I charge 'em with a more heinous Transgression than those void of this Persuasion cou'd be guilty of. 'Tis a Principle universally receiv'd, that the more one sins against Knowledg, the greater is his Guilt. Now in my way of arguing, these Sinners are persuaded of Gospel Truths; then they are more criminal by my Rule than by P. Rapin's, who imagines their Iniquitys spring from a want of Faith. 'Tis certain the Malice of an Action abates in proportion to the Party's Ignorance, unless he's the wilful Cause of it, by stifling the Light of his Conscience o' purpose to sin without controul. Now as God only knows who are thus ignorant

thro Malice, 'twere rash judging to say, those who sin, because almost utterly destitute of Faith, are wickeder than others: But one may safely pronounce so, without rash judging of those who sin under a full Persuasion of Evangelical Truths; and consequently they who are in the Circumstances I laid down, aggravate instead of extenuating their Guilt.

For to alledg, that only the Malice of the Will is capable of obscuring Gospel Truths, is setting up for Judg in a matter above our Cognizance; seeing God alone knows certainly what passes within us, and the proportion of Objects to every Understanding. We daily experience in matters purely Speculative, that the same Reasons appear convincing to one, and very probable to another, which a third Person thinks of no weight. In Pleadings, where we are no way interested, how oft are we struck with that Argument most which is really least solid? How often more affected by the Objections than the Answers, tho these be intrinsically better, and tho it be indifferent to our Fortunes whether they be or no? It were therefore ridiculous to maintain, that every time we prefer one Reason to another, we do it to gratify an Inclination of offending God. Now this being indefensible, it can't with any reason be said, that they who doubt our Mysterys, doubt 'em only because they wish the Gospel false. 'Tis not impossible, that the distance of those times in which the Gospel was confirm'd by infinite Miracles, that strange Depravation of Manners which has overrun Christianity for a thousand Years, the numberless Sects into which it's divided, and each condemn'd by the other, and some writing very learnedly

learnedly and closely against the rest; 'tis not impossible, I say, that all this together may raise a mist to hinder some Mens clearly perceiving the Divinity of the Gospel, without their contributing by a malicious Inclination. However it be, I'm apt to think all Partys may find their Account in what I have said, whether fond of exaggerating the Depravation of Man, or inclin'd to form his Panegyrick. For by saying Men have kept the sacred Depositum of Faith intire, notwithstanding their corrupt Inclinations, I allow 'em a share of Praise; yet even this shews their Malice excessive, since the Light of Faith is not sufficient to correct it.

'Tis of greater Importance than most imagine, to make Man sensible of his extreme Depravation, especially of that monstrous Disorder he's run into, which sways him continually against Principle, and against the Precepts of that Religion he believes deliver'd by God: This, I say, is of Importance, because if we take notice, that all the rest of the Creation is under certain Laws of Mechanism regularly observ'd, and very conformable to our Idea of Order; we must conclude, there's a Principle in Man which is not purely corporeal: for were he mere Matter, he'd be necessarily obedient to that wise and regular Mechanism which governs the rest of the Universe, and not swerve as he does from the Idea which we have of Order. There's therefore a Soul in Man distinct from the Body, and perfecter than Body, since it is this which renders him reasonable. For how can we suppose Bodys subject to Order, and not Substances of a perfecter kind? If the World be the Work of pure Chance, how comes it under Laws

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constantly obey'd? There's no tolerable Answer: this we must at least agree to, that the Nature of things intended the World shou'd be govern'd by wise Laws. But if with respect to Bodys, why not with respect to the Soul of Man? Here we are at a loss again. We must therefore say, that the Soul of Man was, as other things, created in perfect Order, by a Being infinitely wise; but abusing its Liberty, is fallen into Disorder. The more we demonstrate the Corruption of Man, the more we constrain human Reason to believe what God has reveal'd of the Fall of *Adam*. So that there's no need of bringing Religion into the Case, to prove the Malice of Man so prodigious, that only a particular Grace of the Holy Spirit can correct it; and that without this Grace 'tis equal, with respect to Manners, whether one's a downright Atheist, or believes all the Canons of Councils. This is such a Truth, that none of your bold Wits will allow the original Corruption of Man. You shall in a few Days receive my Conjectures on a Society of Atheists.

July 29. 1681.

The End of the First Volume.

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